

THIRTEEN
EXPOUNDED:
TO ALL DEGREES
OF
AMATEUR PLAYERS



W. E. MANNING

R.B.A.N.M'S H.S (M) LIBRARY

Blore 42

Accession No;

1670

U.D.C No:

794.7/MAN

N 04

Date;

5-7-81

A. Thangarulu undian

R. B. A. I. S. H. S. M. LIBRARY

Blore 42

Accessi

No ;

1670

U.D.C

o :

794

7/MAN

2004

Date;

5-7-81

BILLIARDS EXPOUNDED

10¹/₁₉₂₀

A. Thang and Mr. de chris

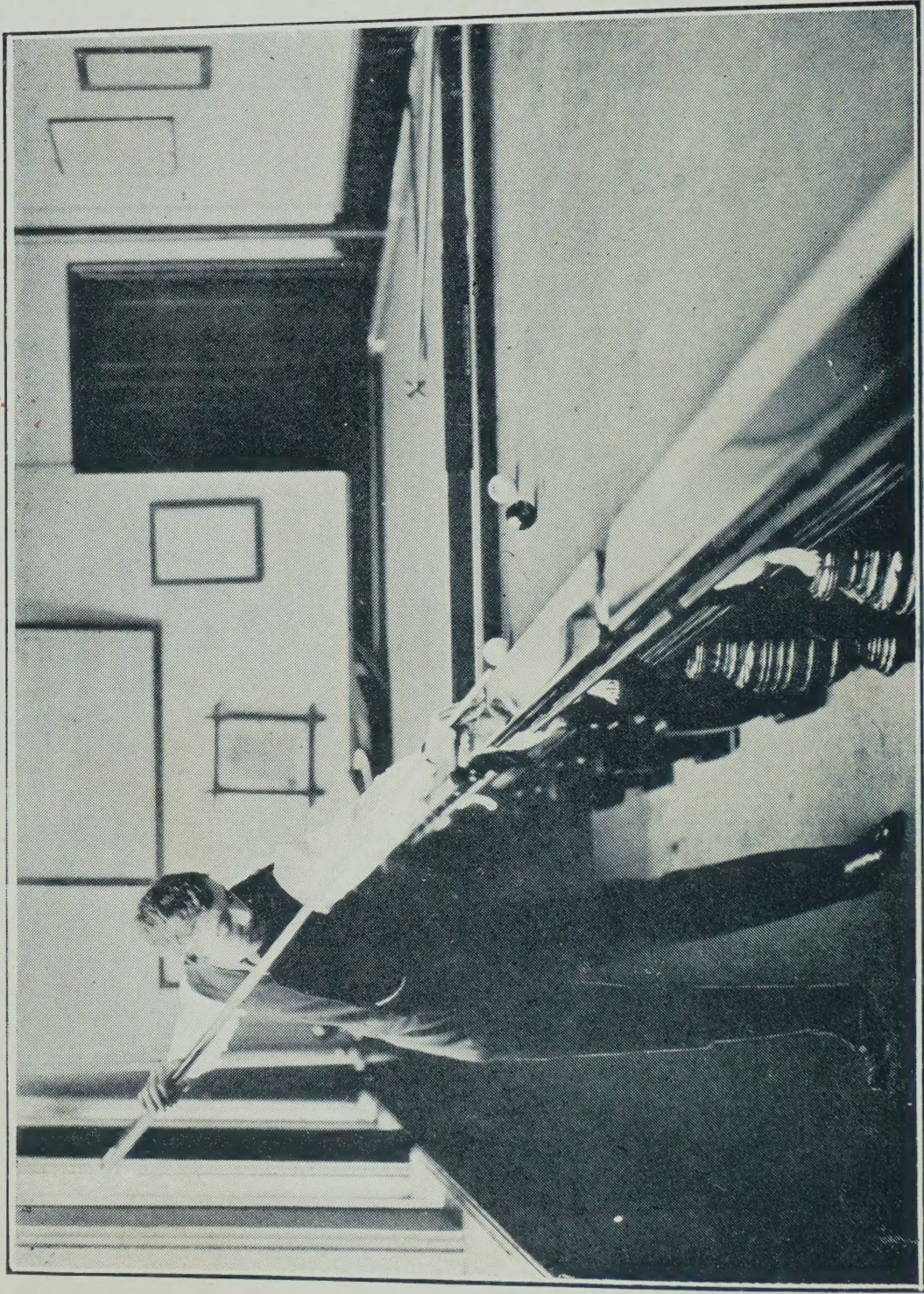


Plate I.—CORRECT MANNER OF PLAYING AT A BALL LYING UNDER A CUSHION (LITTLE UNDER-STOOD BY AMATEUR PLAYERS).

By crooking out the wielding arm wide of the shoulder, and shortening the hold on the cue, according to his height (less in both details for tall men than for those under average height), the player is enabled to plant both feet firmly on the ground, and make the stroke with ease and comfort, so different to the tip-toe, strained attitude generally adopted.

BILLIARDS EXPOUNDED

TO ALL DEGREES OF AMATEUR

PLAYERS

R. B. A. J. S. H. S. (M), LIBRARY

Blore-42

Accession No ;

1670

U.D.C. BY No :

794.7/MAN.

J. P. MANNOCK

Date;

5-7-81. NO 4

WRITTEN AND ARRANGED BY S. A. MUSSABINI

VOLUME II

THE ADVANCED SIDE OF
THE GAME

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON

GRANT RICHARDS

1904

PRINTED BY
WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.

R.B.A.N.M'S H.S (M) LIBRARY	
Blore-42	
Accession No ;	1670
U.D.C. No :	794.7 (MAN)
Date;	5.7.81

N 04

PREFACE

“A thing twice said takes stronger root.”

THE reason for this quotation may be more obvious after a perusal of the contents of this volume than when it immediately confronts the reader. In the teaching of any subject—the desire to thoroughly drive home principles and methods—repetition is a vital, if rather wearisome, necessity. The charge of redundancy may probably be urged against my manner of treatment as concerns the essence of the whole of “Billiards Expounded”—the art of break-making with its two systems carefully detailed. I have foreseen that this might be, and have prepared my defence as set forth by the quoted headline. Billiard players who have attained some measure of proficiency will better appreciate the need of a reminding of what is, and what is not, wanted, than those to whom the art is a mystery unknown, and, therefore, unappreciated.

Again I wish to draw attention to the thoroughness which has marked the work of my collaborator, Mr. S. A. Mussabini.

JOHN PATRICK MANNOCK.

N.B.—ALL THE STROKES SET FORTH ON THE DIFFERENT DIAGRAMS ARE ARRANGED TO BE PLAYED WITH IVORY BALLS. IN EACH THE COURSE OF THE CUE-BALL IS INDICATED BY A CONTINUOUS LINE, THUS ———, AND THE RUNNING OF THE OBJECT-BALLS BY AN INTERSECTED LINE, SO — — — —.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. CLOSE CANNONS	I
II. PIQUÉ AND MASSÉ STROKES	23
III. BREAK-MAKING—THE TWO SCORING SYSTEMS	59
IV. THE MANIPULATION OF THE OBJECT-BALLS IN LOSING-HAZARD PLAY	III
V. CONTROLLING THE RED BALL IN LOSING-HAZARD PLAY	168
VI. THE TOP-OF-THE-TABLE GAME	308
VII. THE BILLIARD-ROOM AND ITS CONTENTS	401
“THE AVERAGE AMATEUR”	410

LIST OF PLATES

PLATE	TO FACE PAGE
I. CORRECT MANNER OF PLAYING AT A BALL LYING UNDER A CUSHION (LITTLE UNDERSTOOD BY AMATEUR PLAYERS)	<i>Frontispiece</i>
II. THE MASSÉ-STROKE—METHOD OF HOLDING THE CUE, AND THE TRIPOD FORMATION OF THE “BRIDGE” HAND	38
III. THE GRAND MASSÉ, WITH THE “BRIDGE” HAND LIFTED ABOVE THE TABLE TO PUT GREATER POWER INTO THE STROKE	42
IV. USING THE SHORT MASSÉ CUE	44

BILLIARDS EXPOUNDED

CHAPTER I

CLOSE CANNONS

A MOST distinctive branch of stroke play, execution, and nicety of judgment is undoubtedly comprised in close-cannon work. It is the highest flight, and by far the most refined form of billiards. The dainty "violin-bow" action of the wrist of the wielding hand; the deft little touches of the cue-point; the brushing strokes across the face of the balls, imperceptible often to the eye and uncaught by the ear; the more defined, yet quite gentle, contacts always driving the two object-balls in front of the cue-ball, combine to make close-cannon play the poetry of billiards. Asking, as it does, for years and years of close study and unwearying practice, this delicate department of the game is almost the sole monopoly of a select few in the professional ranks. Their manipulation and command of the balls is always a subject for admiration and wonderment to the spectators. But any lengthy sequence of close cannons is uncommon to the English game. The pocket play appeals so much that it is never good policy to utilize

the close cannons at any other part of the table than by the top cushion. Circumstances often force the player to act otherwise. But analysis will easily prove that a greater security lies in close-cannon play along the top cushion, with the insurance given by the two corner pockets and the vicinity of the billiard-spot, than in other regions.

Out on the bed of the table close cannons are not a profitable scoring medium. There they, except in a few isolated instances, merely serve the player's purpose of opening up a connection with the pockets. If one has to play two or three cannons with successive strokes, the cause lies in the assured fact that position for the pockets has not been obtained. The experienced player breaks away from the open cannons as soon as possible.

With the three balls bunched together on a cushion, he may, however, avail himself, if he is able, of a sequence of delicate cannons. The cushion is a most helpful factor in keeping the balls together. It bars one line of retreat to the object-ball lying nearest to it, which is sent forward and forward, by infinitesimal stages at each succeeding stroke, dependent, of course, upon the manipulation of the player. The other means of escape held by the object-ball lying nearest the cushion should be alternatively, or conjointly, closed up by the cue-ball and second object-ball. Holding one object-ball by the cushion, though, is only a part, important as it is, of close-cannon play along the rail. The outside object-ball, as the one which lies furthest away from the cushion may well be called, has its own particular needs to be attended to, and it has to be treated very tenderly. For now there is no cushion, as in the case of the first

object-ball (the inside ball), to assist in controlling its movements. Thus, where one may make fullish, and comparatively strong, contacts on the ball nearest the cushion, especially in the way of "kiss" strokes, the outside object-ball must be touched as lightly as possible. Of course, the great thing is to keep the cue-ball in playable position for each succeeding stroke. It is in point of fact the A to Z of the play. All the resources of a player are taxed to meet the multifarious changes in the ball's positions. They wriggle and twist into all sorts of fantastical shapes, each one needing a distinctive stroke, with one "side" or the other, by means of "kisses," all sorts of contacts and the most deft touches of the cue. Always it is the player's aim to work the balls into an ideal position, or as near to it as he can, and guard the cue-ball from being shut out from a direct ball-to-ball cannon, or to leave it "touching" one of the object-balls. The great secret of preventing the balls "touching" in these delicate close cannons is to use "side" at every stroke. The bias makes the cue-ball an uncomfortable companion, its trifle of "side" keeping it religiously aloof from an object-ball after contact, no matter how gently it is struck. You may obtain a comparison by spinning a ball and trying to place your finger on it, or against it. It will be found to resent the proceeding, and slip away. A ball rolling plainly over and over will, however, promptly stop on being touched. Therefore it should be easily understandable that the use of "side" goes a long way towards counteracting a "touching" of the balls in the delicate close cannons.

The action of "side," too, gives the cue-ball a divergence from an object-ball as markedly as it does from the

cushions, and out on the bed of the table. Playing the cannons along a right-handed course, that is, in a right-handed direction (say one starts close-cannon work by the left top pocket and takes the balls towards the right top pocket), right "side" brings the cue-ball much more directly back from an object-ball than left "side" does. The left "side" gives it a more slanting, or forward, direction. These effects, though, are exactly reversed when the balls are being played in a left-handed direction. Few right-handed players can manage a series of close cannons when playing in a left-handed direction. It is very uphill work to them. So vastly different to the comparatively simple procedure of taking the balls a right-handed course. The left-handed player also has his partialities, a left-handed direction suiting him altogether better than a right-handed one.

A low striking of the cue-ball exercises a decidedly helpful part amid the sequence of the close cannons. Its *forte* lies in the "kiss" cannon work. It throws the cue-ball so directly back, and also guarantees to it a truth of path from the "kiss" which a higher stroke on it, or at its sides, could not do. Further, it enables these "kisses" to be played at a very reduced rate of speed as compared to the ordinary class of stroke. For, being struck below its centre, it is revolving at once back towards the player, a circumstance which adds greatly to its speed on the recoil from the object-ball.

The ideal position for close-cannon play along, and by, a cushion is as the stroke numbered 1 on Fig 1. The cue-ball commands the situation for the simplest of cannons on to the two object-balls. The first of these (the inside ball) is lying against, and the second

(the outside ball) placed on an imaginary line just about

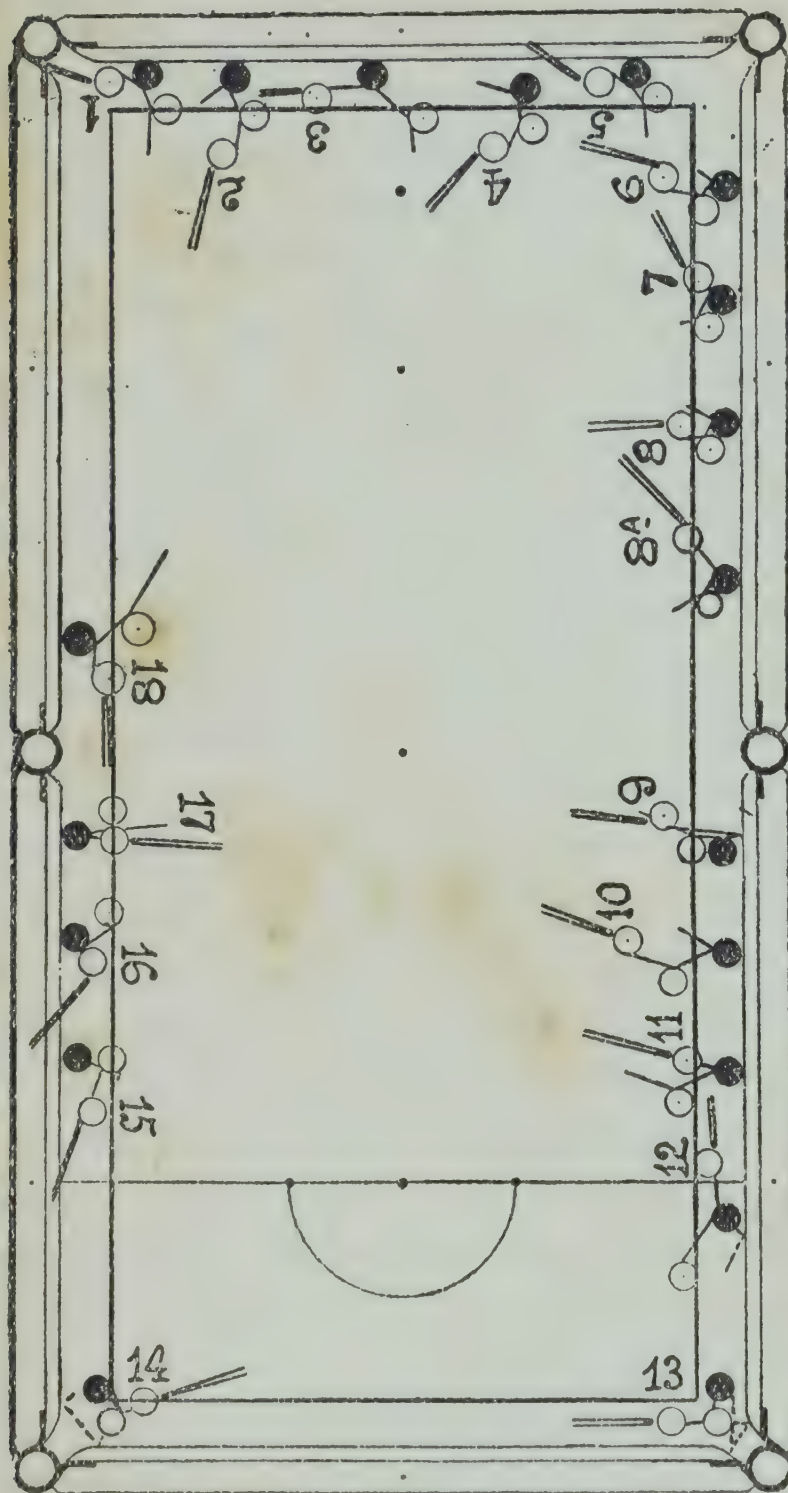


FIG. 1.—An assortment of close cannons.

two balls' distance from the cushion. This imaginary line, actually drawn on the diagram, as may be seen,

represents the line that the outside ball of the two object-balls should take. Perfect play will make it keep truly to this parallel line with the cushion stroke after stroke. But as there never has been, and never will be, perfection in billiard-playing, this outside ball's course fluctuates between movements outside and inside what should be its proper track. The closer the player can make it run along this line the better is he playing his close cannons. The further the outside ball is sent from the cushion beyond the imaginary line, or the nearer it is left by the cushion within the imaginary line, the greater the fault in his play, and the greater the chances of losing the close-cannon position. If it gets too far away from the cushion, the recovery of the position is generally hopeless. If too near the cushion, it so hampers the movements of the inside ball that in a stroke or two the command of the balls for cannon play is lost, even if there is not a "cover" asking for a *massé* shot, or a difficult stroke from the cushion. With the outside ball two balls' or so distance away from the cushion, a certain freedom of action is permitted to the inside ball. It can move along without hindrance all the time the outside ball keeps its proper distance. This "imaginary line" theory for the outside ball has been proved to be the basis of practical close-cannon play in the best of schools.

Dealing with such a complicated subject as the close cannons, one must inevitably pursue a policy of "sifting the wheat from the chaff" in presenting a selection of these strokes. The changes of position are so infinite, and the general character of the play so dependent upon circumstances, that it is really impossible

to do more than tread the fringe of it. As the action of the cue-ball and the object-balls has been summarized, so must the expositions of the strokes be. Of these, Fig. 1 has an assortment of one kind and another that will furnish the system of the play in fairly descriptive fashion. At any rate, the groundwork may be gathered from it, if not the hair's breadth meeting of the balls from the most gentle touches, and the great command that is required over the cue.

Stroke 1 shows the ideal position which the player is ever striving to regain. It is the easiest possible placing of the balls for the cannon and "after-leave." All his subsequent efforts are expended in an attempt to regain this same position, just as in the other details of billiards (the losing and winning hazards) one strives to work the balls into a favourite placing. Seldom, though, even in the case of a really good player and a run of fifty or sixty close cannons, does the ideal position materialize. Start such a player off with it, and notice how very seldom he turns the balls about to form this identical angle, or anything closely approaching it. Yet all the time, unconsciously as some do, he is trying to work back to this position. He is, all the time, doing all that lies within his power to "leave" the balls in easy position for the next stroke, and the easiest position of all is the "ideal position" as shown by stroke 1. The object-balls are nicely in front of the cue-ball, with the outside ball lying in advance to form the simplest of angles. With the gentlest of touches, hitting the cue-ball on its right side, a thin, brushing contact with the two object-balls will send the cue-ball below the other two. The idea of the stroke is to

practically retain the object-balls in their disposition towards the cushion yet moving them, of necessity, slightly onwards. The right "side" on the cue-ball is used to send it off as much to the right of the outside ball as possible after contact. Left "side" would cause it to roll over to the left of the outside ball ; so, too, would a plain ball, but in a much lesser degree. Running at all out to the left, the cue-ball would be placed behind, or there would be a possibility of its being so, instead of in a nice angle position by the object-balls. As played the "leave" is good, the right "side" enabling the cue-ball to keep clear of entanglements, and have the two object-balls nicely in front.

Stroke 2 is the second ideal position. It is played from the position the balls ran into following stroke 1. Here may be seen an attempt to work the balls back into *the* "ideal position." As in the abiding rule of the play, the outside ball is but faintly touched by the cue-ball, which, however, falls heavily and fully on the inside ball. There is then a "kiss," which holds the latter to the cushion (it had only been moved the barest fraction of an inch away from there by the first stroke), and the cue-ball is turned over to the left of the inside ball, thus keeping the object-balls still nicely in front of it. The use of left "side" has caused the cue-ball to get so well placed, for, as before explained, left "side" makes the cue-ball take a slanting direction after contact with the second object-ball. Stroke 2's attempt to recover the "ideal position" is not successful, although the balls are well "left." The fault is very easy to discern. It occurred in the contact with the inside ball, which should have been met at half-ball instead of the

actual much fuller stroke. Had the half-ball contact been gained on the inside ball, the "ideal position" would have been approximately formed, for the cue-ball would have been "kissed" much nearer to the cushion, and the inside ball must have gone onwards and nearer the outside ball while still standing close to the cushion. The result of stroke 2, however, leaves the object-balls comparatively widely apart, and a niceish stroke is required to make the three balls come favourably, and more closely, together again.

Stroke 3 shows the "leave" from the previous cannon. It also gives a specimen of a neat "gathering" shot at very short range by the medium of a "kiss" between cue-ball and first object-ball. The cue-ball is played very gently on its left side, and the inside ball (tight up against the cushion, or very, very close to it) is hit about quarter-ball. As soon as it is hit the inside ball comes off the cushion and bumps, or "kisses," the slow-moving cue-ball on to the outside ball. The left "side" helps greatly in giving the cue-ball its forward path after the "kiss." It has been aimed to take the outside ball as gently as possible on that part (the right side) which will keep the latter on its course along the imaginary line parallel to the cushion. But it hit the outside ball too quickly, with the result that the latter is sent a ball's distance wide of its proper course. The "kiss" has jumped the inside ball onwards so much that it runs nearly in line with the outside ball and well off the cushion.

Stroke 4 tells of the actual positions taken up by the three balls, and the bid that is made to regain the "ideal position." The outside ball is so much beyond its

defined line that the player tries to get it back there while dropping the cue-ball half-ball from it on to the inside ball to place it on, or as near as possible to, the cushion. Left "side" is again used to make the cue-ball pass away, as widely as is possible with such a gentle stroke, to the left of the inside ball. But for playing a trifle too heavily on the outside ball, which now falls below the imaginary line of its course, this would have been quite a perfect shot. The cue-ball and inside ball run beautifully into position, but the outside ball goes perilously near to getting behind the inside ball, and thus asking for a big stroke. However, as things turn out, a thin cannon is "left on."

Stroke 5 denotes the "leave" from stroke 4, and the play on the balls there. It is rather a touchy stroke. Played anything like too fast, or getting too firm a hold of the object-balls, the position for close-cannon play is irretrievably lost. Such placings test the cue-power of the best of players to the full. Right "side" to throw the cue-ball as straight as possible from the outside ball, and quite thin contacts are needed in this class of stroke. The idea is to move the two object-balls ever so little forward, and yet retain the same distance and angle between them.

As stroke 6 will prove by the position of the balls, the preceding cannon was not at all badly played. The outside ball is certainly below the proper line of its course, though not dangerously so. In the playing of stroke 6 care must be exercised to touch the outside ball very lightly, so that it shall move in a parallel line to the cushion and not towards it. The cue-ball should be made to drop full on the middle of the inside ball,

from which, by using left "side," it will "kiss" away somewhat to the left. Stroke 6 shows the worst-played of any of these close cannons, for the balls are "left" as in stroke 7, a by no means favourable position. The outside ball is now perilously below the line it should keep to. To make matters worse, the inside ball has left the cushion and is halfway, or nearly so, on to the imaginary line. There is, therefore, a decided clashing of interests between the object-balls, whilst the cue-ball is none too well situated to remedy things. However, a really good right "side" stroke, placing the inside ball in its proper place—on the cushion—brushing the outside ball and passing the cue-ball out to nicely command the next cannon, retrieves the position. The outside ball has, perforce, been sent even further below its allotted line than before. It is only too evident that something, and that speedily, must be done to work it back by the imaginary line.

Stroke 8 gives the positions of the balls as "left" from stroke 7. They are not at all unfavourable. The chief difficulty lies in the presence of the outside ball so near the cushion. It must be again touched as thinly and gently as possible, dropping the cue-ball full on to the inside ball. The "kiss," and the use of left "side," will send the cue-ball obliquely from it. The outside ball is sent a hair's breadth further under the imaginary line than before, but the inside ball is placed almost tight against the cushion. A particularly touchy shot has now to be made to keep the balls in the sequence of the play. If accurately handled, the unsafe and unsound position of the outside ball so much below the line along which it should run may be retrieved. It can be pushed

out to its proper line by the inside ball as the latter rebounds from the cushion on being struck by the cue-ball. The stroke is the gentlest of "kiss" cannons, played by dropping full on to the middle of the inside ball, using left "side." The cue-ball is "kissed" on to the outside ball, which is immediately met by the inside ball (see stroke 8A). There is just enough room for the latter to get between the outside ball and the cushion, and getting there by the "double-knock" action which the full stroke on it by the cue-ball causes, the outside ball is sent up on its line. And so this close-cannon play goes on. The idea is always the same, but the imperfect stroke-play brings about never-ending changes of position. There is a familiar likeness to be noticed in the character of the strokes, yet, for the greater part, no two are exactly alike. Some little alteration in the placing the one or the other of the object-balls, or of the cue-ball, makes each cannon singular to itself. But the cue-ball works out from the cushion and back again in a most mechanical kind of way. It is always trying to produce a similar shaping of the balls to stroke 1 as it is played back to the cushion, or, as seen in stroke 2, when it is played beyond the imaginary line. Given that it could regularly induce such results, the making of a lengthy succession would be quite a simple matter, instead of the treacherous and delicate proceeding it actually is. As in other departments of the game, various standards of quality may be seen in close-cannon "breaks," some good, some passable, some indifferent. The more simply and openly the balls are kept in their defined positions (the inside ball on or quite close to the cushion, and the outside ball on the imaginary line) the better the play.

To furnish a more replete view of the close cannons which are commonly employed, the chain of consecutive strokes, commencing with stroke 1, is broken with stroke 8A. Strokes 9, 10, and 11 show three very valuable movements of the cue-ball. The first of these is brought into use when the latter is too directly behind the two object-balls to make the usual thin ball-to-ball cannon. Using running "side," and striking the cushion first in advance of the inside ball, it comes off, lightly touching both object-balls to run well past them. Stroke 10 shows the positions of the three balls following this cushion stroke.

Stroke 10 shows the balls as widely apart as one may well expect to have them in the throes of close-cannon play. The outside ball has to be put back by its line, and the inside ball "squeezed" gently along the cushion as the result of the cue-ball dropping fully upon it. A plain-ball stroke places the balls as they are seen in stroke 11, which is of the decided "kiss-back" order. The inside ball hit full in the face throws the cue-ball back, a little left "side" taking it gently on to the side of the outside ball. Thence it passes onwards to set up a formation of the balls very similar to that represented by stroke 10. The great thing to remember in all such "kiss-back" cannons is the truer line the cue-ball will take, and the less force that will be needed, if a below-the-centre stroke is used.

Stroke 12 bears no continuity to the preceding trio. It is, however, a very prominent aid to working the balls into close quarters. Carrying left "side" to send it well forward, the cue-ball half runs-through the inside ball, sending it along and upsides by the outside ball.

The idea is to "leave" the balls as nearly as possible in the positions shown in stroke 2. A very gentle stroke is needed.

Stroke 13 provides a pretty little cannon by a corner pocket which leads to the best of close-cannon arrangements. The balls, as situated, are not by any means favourably placed. The white ball is lying dangerously near the pocket. As an object-lesson in the utility of the pocket "shoulders," the "saving" of the white ball and the charmingly simple means by which the balls are made to join, none better can be had. The first-played object-ball is steered full on to the facing, or side-cushion, "shoulder" of the pocket, which promptly throws it back on to the top-cushion "shoulder." Hitting the latter, the played object-ball runs up the side cushion and joins the second object-ball, which has been gently cannoned upon. The cue-ball must be tenderly "screwed" from one ball to the other, so as not to interfere with the run of the first-played object-ball. The latter being hit quite full in the face, takes nearly all of the pace out of the cue-ball, allowing it to make the lightest of light contacts on the second object-ball. Thus the position of the second object-ball is scarcely altered. This little "gathering" stroke may be played on either side of a corner pocket ; for instance, the red ball could be made the cue-ball in the position under notice.

Stroke 14 shows the method of taking the balls by a corner pocket while engaged in close-cannon play. It is really not a very intricate affair, but one, all the same, that makes some call on the player's judgment. As a rule the attempt to "turn the corner" is made too

quickly, and, as a natural result, the close-cannon position generally suffers. It must never be forgotten that the closer one can take the balls to the pocket, the more easily can they be made to move over, and on, to the next cushion. Stroke 13 provides a nice example of the truth of this statement. However, there is no need to proceed to such an extreme as that. Get the object-balls shaped as in stroke 14, the one inclining to the side cushion, and the other to the top cushion, with the cue-ball somewhere as shown, and the "turning-the-corner" process is an easy matter. All of the pace of the stroke must be used on the first object-ball, which, being sent flush on to the cushion, clears the pocket "shoulders" and joins the second object-ball on the other cushion. Place the cue-ball a couple of ball's distance (as represented by the size on the diagram) down the table, and the red ball can be turned over to the end cushion.

Stroke 15 shows the cue-ball lying midway between the object-balls, which are in parallel line to the cushion—a bad position. By pushing the outside ball a trifle forward, hitting it the slowest of slow half-ball, and using some left "side," an angle may be formed for the cue-ball to operate on the recognized close-cannon principles—the two object-balls slightly in advance of the cue-ball. The great thing to guard against is getting too thinly on the inside ball, so that the cue-ball passes between it and the outside ball. The idea is to "leave" the balls in the "ideal position" of stroke 1. What actually happens may be seen from the positions of the balls in stroke 16, which asks for a very thin, gentle stroke with right "side" on the cue-ball. Here the attempt is made

to gain the second most favourable position, that of stroke 2. But there is not enough run in the cue-ball, and it stops dead as it strikes the outside ball. This is getting the balls "out of position." But the "recovery of position" may be obtained by the medium of a "kiss-back" stroke, such as that of stroke 11. This "kiss-back" is such a potent factor in close-cannon play, that I recommend it as the best practice-stroke in that connection. It asks for delivery of "touch," a nice knowledge of the angle of rebound, the effect that either "side" produces in it, the direct return gained by a low striking, and the curving rebound of a high striking of the cue-ball. Often a half-dozen, and more, of these "kiss-back" cannons may be consecutively made. Their application to close cannons is, however, to work the balls into the easiest possible shape. Stroke 18 affords an example of the "squeeze-through" stroke when the balls are placed for close-cannon play. By hitting the two object-balls very, very thinly, the cue-ball is enabled to pass between them, and reverse the direction of the balls' progress.

A frequent cause of error in cannon play with the balls near the cushion is want of knowledge. The cannon is carelessly played, and, to the player's surprise, if not annoyance, the balls cover up along the line of the cushion. Fig. 2 shows a couple of the positions which are usually mishandled in this way. The first object-ball is a trifle off, and the second object-ball on or close to the cushion. To play thinly and gently across the face of the balls is simply fatal to the "break." The cue-ball just drops the first object-ball on, or beside, the cushion, and barely disturbing the second object-ball,

passes to the other side of the latter, leaving the three balls in a line—the very thing that the expert cannon-player ever aims to avoid. If the first object-ball had been hit rather fully, so that it rebounded some two or three balls' distance from the cushion, the cue-ball would not have been shut out. The latter, hitting the further side of the second object-ball, leaves an easy angle cannon "on" for the next stroke.

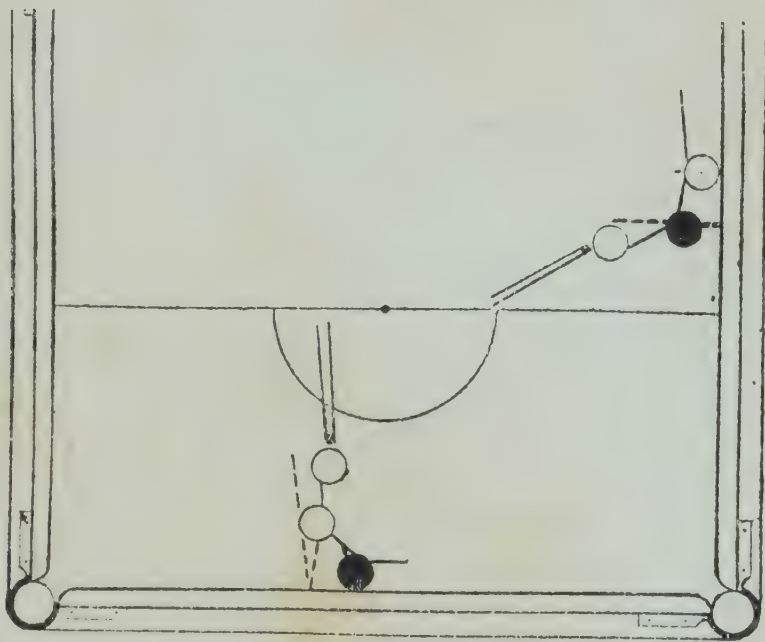


FIG. 2.—Avoiding a "cover" by getting well hold of the first object-ball.

A selection of strokes which may be considered in the close-cannon class are presented on Fig. 3. They are in the open field of play, yet in all respects they are of a similar nature to the cannons which figure by the cushions on Fig. 1. There is simply an expansion of the range, that is all. Stroke 1 is a slow half run-through "gathering" cannon, in which the first object-ball is driven to and from a cushion. A more certain "gathering" stroke there cannot be found in all the wide repertory of cannon-play. Stroke 2 is a very slow screw, driving the first

object-ball on to a cushion, which returns it to join the other balls, whose contact barely moves the second

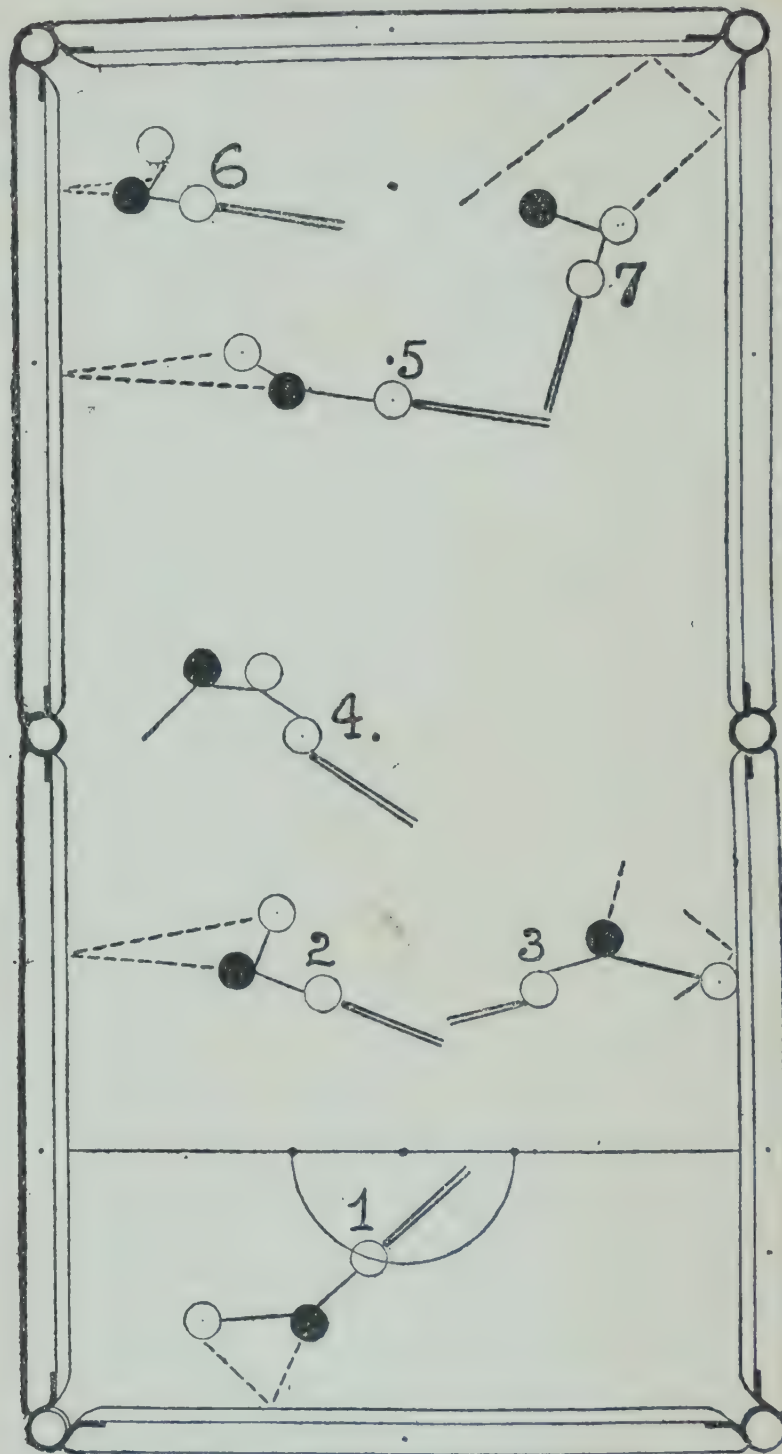


FIG. 3.—Another close-cannon series.

object-ball. Stroke 3 gives an idea of playing a thin cannon on to a ball "tight" on, or very close to, the

cushion. Touching the first object-ball as thinly and gently as possible, using right "side" to pass the cue-ball on to the right after cannoning, the second object-ball is hit about half-ball. There is a little "kiss" which puts the cue-ball nicely in position, and sends the second object-ball a few inches away, to form an easy angle for the next shot. Stroke 4 shows a cannon across the face of the balls, using a running "side." The idea is to "leave" a like cannon from the other side of the table. Stroke 5 is a direct run-through "gathering" cannon, the first object-ball being played to the cushion and made to rejoin company with the second object-ball. Stroke 6 furnishes an example of the American "baulk-line" game, which is a line drawn 12 to 18 inches from the cushion all around the table. The idea of this branch of American billiards is to get the other object-ball as close to the outer side of the line as possible, and so utilize the two object-balls for cannon-play. This is naturally a vastly more complicated game than the ordinary way of playing cannons by the cushions, in which no restrictions are placed on the positions of the outer ball. But that it may be made to yield large runs of cannons the American professors have given abundant proof. In Stroke 6 the red ball may be taken as the ball inside the baulk-line, and the object-white the one lying just outside it. With the balls in the positions shown, the stars of the Transatlantic billiard world would consider that they had them well placed. They would make a sequence of strokes of the "stun" order, playing as fully as possible on to the ball nearest the cushion. As it hits that the cue-ball rolls slowly to the second object-ball, and the first object-ball coming back from

the cushion hits it full in the face, as often making the cannon by this "kiss" as not. The great thing in these kind of cannons is to see that the first-played object-ball is kept in front of the cue-ball, the latter blocking its run from the cushion every time, and so touching the second object-ball when cannoning as to always come nicely out on the side that it cannons from. The finer the touch on the second object-ball the longer the reign of the sequence of cannons. Stroke 7 shows a gentle "screw" cannon, in which the first object-ball is driven around the corner of the table to come out and join the second object-ball—a pretty and easy shot this.

Undoubtedly the greatest thing known to close-cannon play is the "anchor stroke," devised and put into

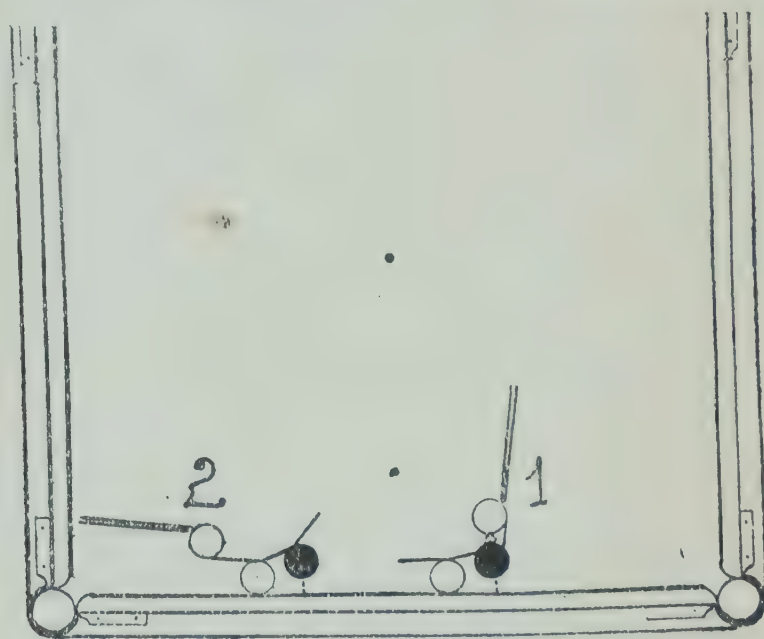


FIG. 4.—The American "anchor" stroke.

effect by that wizard of the cue, the late Frank Ives. As its name implies, the stroke forces an anchorage of the two object-balls, so enabling the cue-ball to pass from one side to the other of them as it cannons. One ball is on the cushion, or very nearly so, and the other

from half a ball's to a full ball's distance away from it. Playing very gently and fully on to the outside ball, trying to bring it back to its position, left "side" (in a right-handed direction) sends the cue-ball across the face of the cushioned object-ball, and it is "kissed" away to the other side. The second stroke is played with the idea of leaving the original position. The

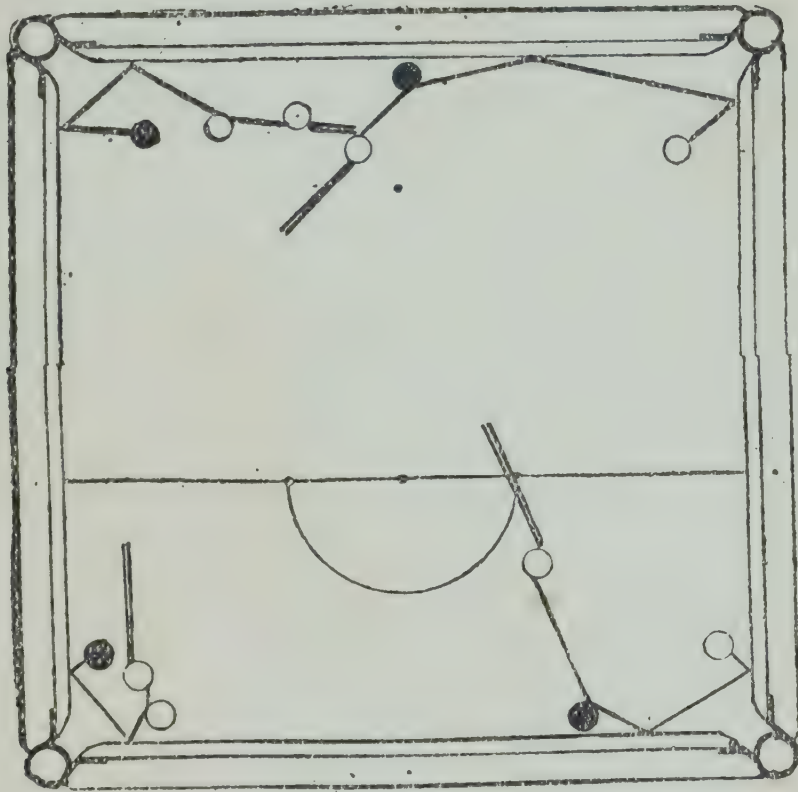


FIG. 5.—Short cannons around the corners of the table.

cushioned ball is thinly touched, and the further hit just hard enough to bring it away from the cushion again. As in everything else, the beginning of this play is the most difficult. The first few strokes want very nice handling. Get safely through these, and position is much more easily maintained. With the object-balls keeping to the same places stroke after stroke, the cloth begins to "cup," that is, form a hole where they stand.

Once this happens the expert player can go on indefinitely. As an instance in point, Ives made a run of over one hundred cannons some years ago on an English table.

Close cannons around the corners of the table are shown on Fig. 5. They help one out of many an awkward predicament, and are, as a rule, excellent mediums for after-position. The chief thing to be taken into consideration is to get nicely behind the second object-ball, driving it away from the cushion it stands by, and not along it.

TAKE NOTE THAT AN UPLIFTING OF THE CUE-BUTT IN PLAYING THE VERY GENTLE CLOSE CANNONS IS A GREAT INSURANCE AGAINST LEAVING THE CUE-BALL TOUCHING THE OBJECT-BALLS.

CHAPTER II

PIQUÉ AND MASSÉ STROKES

THE VALUE OF RAISING THE CUE-BUTT

THE very pinnacle of the billiard-ladder is attained with a raising of the cue-butt to its greatest height. It may not inaptly be said that, with the cue lying flat (that is, in the horizontal plane) when striking a plain ball, the first rung is taken. Then, by degrees, one goes up the steps with "screw" and "side" shots, and then higher and higher still as the cue-butt is raised, and, incidentally, the cue-point depressed, on the stroke. Every additional elevation of the cue-butt ensures greater power being given to the cue-ball, and less communicated to the object-ball played on. This goes on increasing until, with an absolutely perpendicular alignment, all the force of the cue's impact on the top of the ball, centrally, fore and aft, or at the sides of its then strikable face, results in an almost entire killing of all motive power. Pinched between the cue and bed of the table, the double resistance is too strong for the ball. Further, the line of the cue gives it no tangible direction, a point which is, perhaps, the more important of the two ; for in this lies the whole secret of billiard-playing, whether the cue is lying horizontally or its butt held

aloft. In all strokes the direction the cue-ball is primarily to take, and the pace given to it, is to be gauged by the line of the cue-butt.

To begin at the beginning of this, the ultra-scientific side of the billiard art, reference should be made to the "swerving-ball" strokes shown and commented on in the chapter devoted to "side" (Vol. I.). They represent a half-massé, and are executed on exactly the same principles as that intricate shot. Then we come to close "screws" of every kind, in which the raising of the knuckles of the "bridge" hand, as high as it is possible to do, induce at the same time a perceptible uplifting of the cue-butt. The cue-point goes down at the ball, giving a tremendous help in imparting the required retrograde action. The poorest player will at once derive wonderful benefit from this raising of the knuckles of the "bridge" hand in all his "screw" strokes. He will not only get double the amount of retrograde force into the ball, but, in addition, he will be enabled to do so at one-half the pace that the ordinary flat-lying cue gives. As much as the "swerving-ball" strokes are minor editions of the massé proper, these "screws" with the upraised "bridge" are elementary forms of the piqué.

Now, the piqué shot is just a plain "screw" with a vertical cue-butt, the cue-ball being struck aft of its top centre. By its agency the player brings a ball directly back to him, as he does with the ordinary "screw-back," when his cue lies horizontally above the table. It is the identical stroke, but in another guise. The horizontal cue accounts for the "screws" at all ranges, saving when the cue-ball and first object-ball lie very close to each

other. Then it cannot allow the cue-ball to do its destined work, as the nature of the stroke throws too much pace into it, so that it does not rotate immediately on being struck ; for, as I have said, the horizontally lying cue gives the maximum of pace at all strengths of stroke. On the other hand, the more the butt of the cue is raised in the air the less pace is imparted to the ball struck, and, naturally, that which it collides with. But what the ball loses in pace it gains in rotatory power. The vertical cue used in the piqué turns the ball spontaneously on striking it, without the preliminary sliding action induced by the "flat" cue, which permits of no retrograde movement from an object-ball lying closely in front of it.

To obtain a nice illustration of the varying paces induced by the elevation of the cue-butt, try the strokes shown on Figs. 6 and 7. In the first of these the lie of the cue is at an angle of about 60 degrees, a half-and-half sort of stroke, which puts enough forward momentum into the cue-ball as to impart the necessary force to bring the played object-ball back with it from the cushion towards the red ball. The cannon is thus well played, leaving the three balls nicely together after it has been made. The cue-ball is hit well behind its centre (the centre to be found by the elevation of the cue), and the stroke is a modified form of the piqué.

To leave the first object-ball by the cushion instead of bringing it back with the cue-ball, the cue should be almost raised to its highest possible elevation. The cue-ball is hit right behind its top centre, the stroke being a pure piqué, or perpendicular "screw." Nearly all the power of the stroke is put into the cue-ball,

which runs back to the red, leaving the first object-ball away by the cushion rail. These two examples

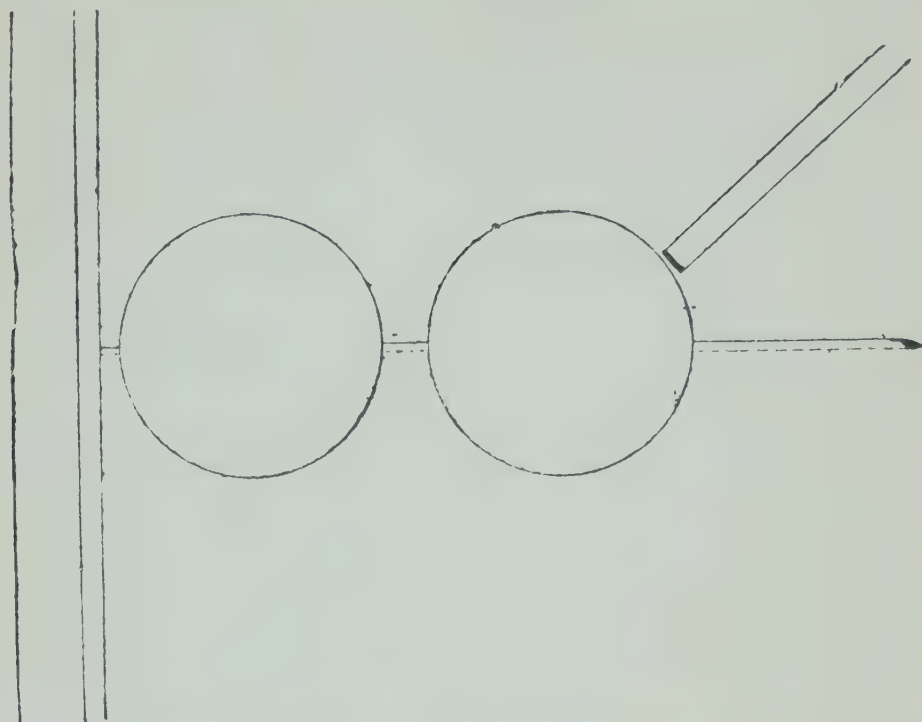


FIG. 6.—Piqué stroke, bringing the first object-ball back from the cushion with the cue-ball.

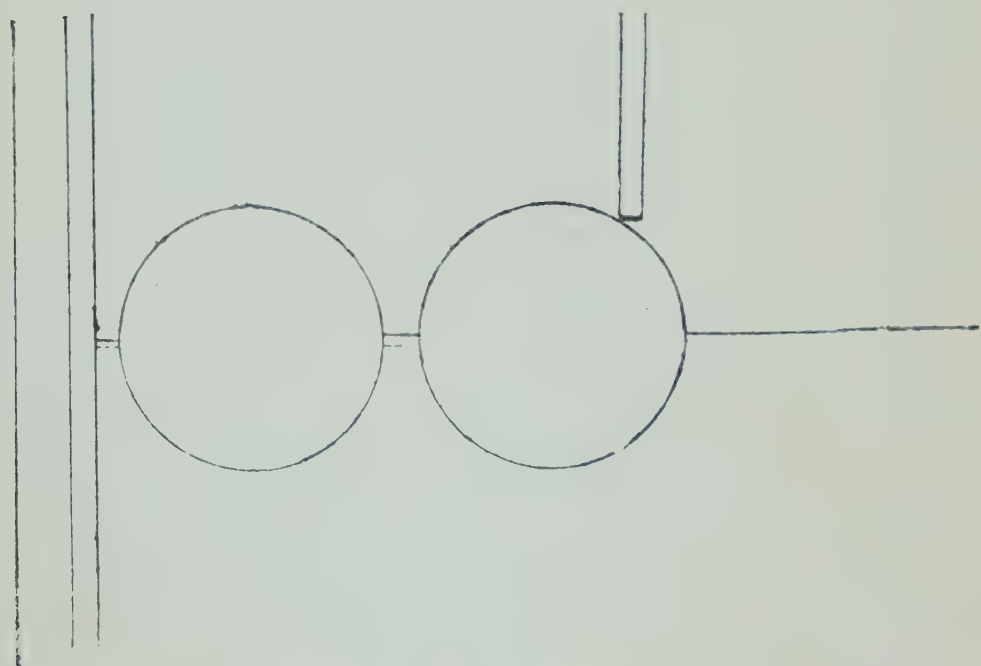


FIG. 7.—Leaving the first object-ball by the cushion.

present excellent object-lessons of the proportionate

added power that goes into the cue-ball, and the lessening force conveyed to object-balls, according to the height to which the cue-butt is raised.

As far as English billiards is concerned, the different effects to be produced from a raised cue-butt may almost be said to be a force of the future. For many years our professionals knew of little more than the swerving ball, the raised "bridge" hand for "screws," and the piqué. They knew, of course, how to obtain a clear course to an object-ball masked, or covered, by another, as shown on Fig. 8. The uplifted cue-butt and plentiful running "side" send the cue-ball curving around, and by, the ball standing near the middle pocket, to run on to the one in the region of the top pocket. The piqué has also been part of the English game for the past fifty years. But the biggest stroke that comes with a raised cue-butt, the sinuous, curling masséd ball, is only just coming into it. Up to 1898 our game was disfigured by the "odious push-stroke." Not until it was ruled out did our players begin to cultivate the massé, and then only in a half-hearted kind of way. It has taken years to get it into fashion, but now it has come to stay. Yet, as compared with those past-masters of its manipulation, the French and Americans, our first-class cueists, in the main, play the stroke in the most primitive fashion. The English players only use the massé when absolutely obliged to. The French and Americans, on the other hand, use it indiscriminately, as much for position (when a plainer stroke could have scored but given a doubtful "leave") as the dictates of necessity. They employ it scientifically ; we merely in an opportunist sense.

But there is no reason at all why the massé should

not be, at least, as well handled here as in other lands. In commenting on the stroke, it has been the general

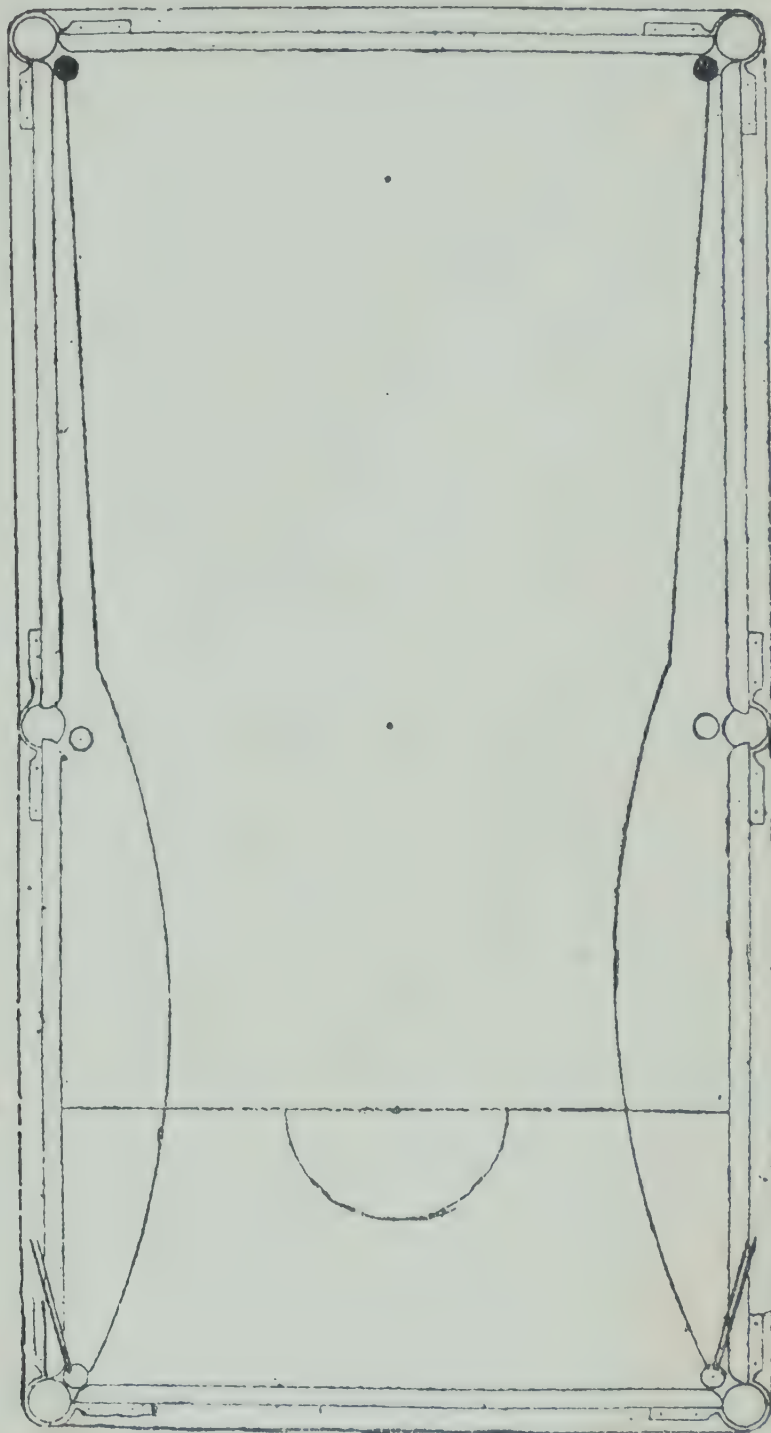


FIG. 8.—Curving around to get at a covered ball.

custom to ascribe the proficiency of the Continental and American players to their bigger balls and heavier cues.

But it is a very dubious point as to whether they do derive any advantage from them. For my own part, I consider that the smaller the ball played upon the easier must the making of the massé be. You are enabled to come down on it from a greater height—a decided assistance to your stroke. And as for the heavier cues—well, the wonder is that there can be found men who do such feats with them. Our own are better suited to the delicacy of touch, and fluency of cue-movement before the ball is struck, than any used on the $2\frac{1}{4}$ -inch balls known to the carambolage. We have natural advantages, I consider, in every detail of the massé stroke, which, when scientifically assimilated into our game, will lend an astonishing improvement to it; for, of a truth, there is no knowing its limit of usefulness. The piqué and massé combined can work such influences over cue-ball and object-balls as to make perfection a long way beyond the reach of the present generation of billiard-players. A timely application of these two forces, however, would often bridge over what appear to be hopelessly impossible positions.

As a proof of what may be accomplished by the aid of the piqué and massé, I show on Fig. 9 how it is possible to cannon on to a circle of balls enclosing cue-ball and first object-ball, and yet move the latter in precisely the same direction at every different stroke. This looks, and, of course, is, a rare testimony to the value of the raised cue-butt, and the command that it can be made to exercise over the balls. But remarkable as this effect of the raised cue-butt is, it is small as compared with what can really be accomplished. For not only can the played object-ball be moved in one

given direction (as shown on Fig. 9), but actually *it is within the bounds of possibility to cannon from either side of it*. Finality in regard to the massé stroke is, I am certain, very far from having been reached, or I should not put forward such a strong and positive assertion. The sending of the played object-ball in any given line, attuning its movements to the

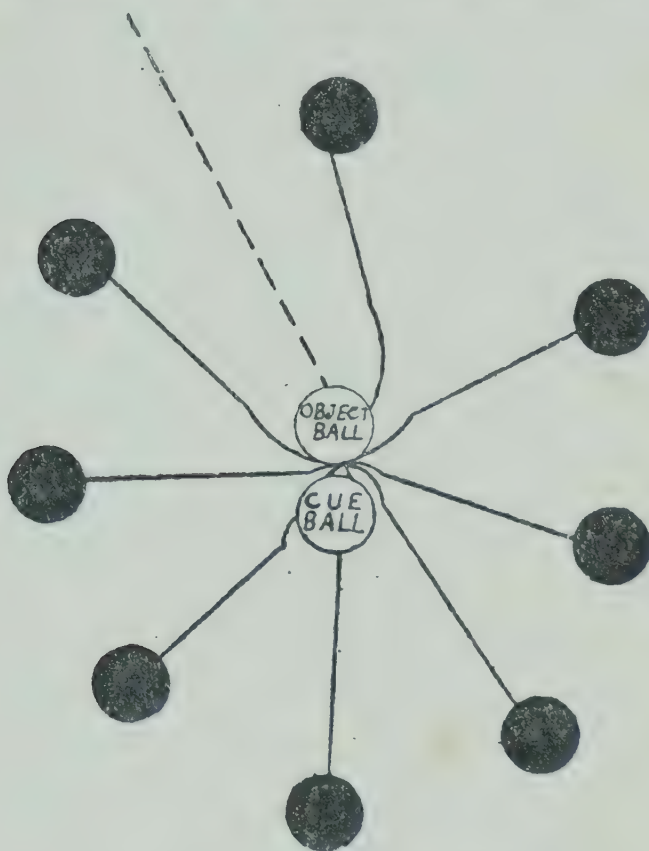


FIG. 9.—Cannoning on to a circle of balls, by means of the piqué and massé, yet moving the first object-ball in exactly the same direction at every stroke.

needs of after-position, means the very acme of billiard-playing perfection. But, being possible, there is no reason to doubt that the day will come when such a proficient is unearthed. Scientific billiards is on the march, and there should be no stopping it.

As concerns the manipulation of the piqué and massé strokes, I will take them in their given order.

Of course, the piqué is far and away the more simple ; it is, as I have previously explained, just a plain "screw," or retrograde, stroke, with a raised cue-butt, and its action is entirely equivalent to a screw-back, or recoil, shot with the cue lying flat above the bed of the table. Having pointed out some of its chief essentials, a plunge may be made straight away into the technical execution of the valuable piqué shot. To make it in thorough-going fashion, and on the principle of the cue-ball following the line of the cue-butt, the player's ball should be struck aft of its top centre, so—

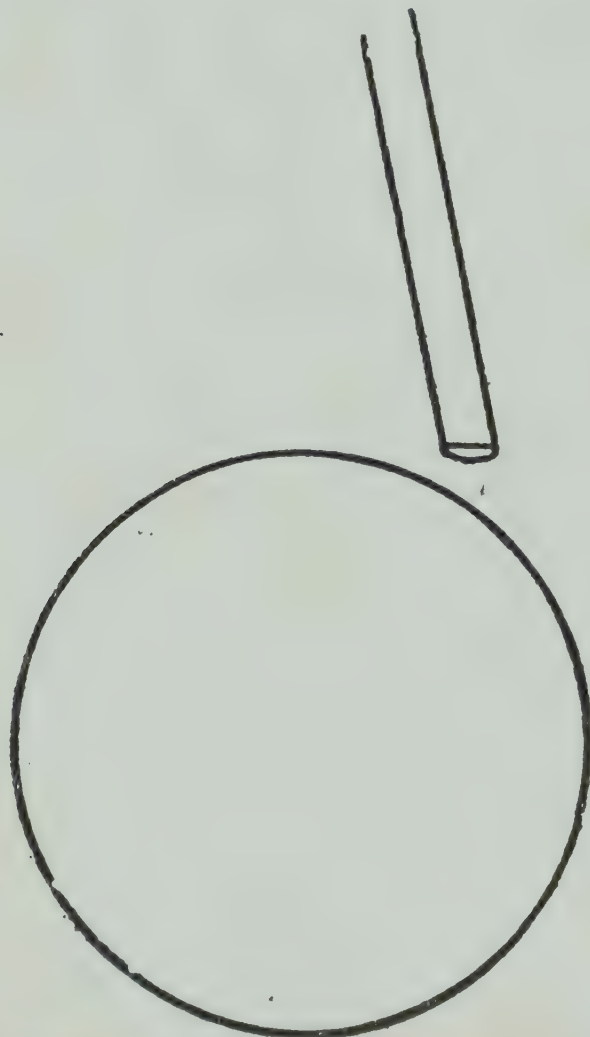


FIG. 10.—Showing the lie of the cue in the pure piqué shot.

The lie of the cue is slightly towards the player.

Before dropping it on the ball for the stroke, the cue has to be moved up and down as rapidly as one is able to do. These preparatory movements give life to the shot. No dull or previously unmoved cue can impart the lively motion which is the essence of the piqué, and, in point of fact, all "screw" strokes. Keep it slithering up and down, as quickly and evenly as possible. In making the actual stroke on the cue-ball, let the blow be as light as you can make it. Do not try to jab through the ball on to the table. Try always, rather, to see how daintily and crisply the impact may be made. The preliminary impulse to the cue assists such a consummation in a really remarkable degree. In short, the great thing to be aimed at is the maximum of rotary motion with the least force that can be put into the stroke.

A good idea of the piqué may be obtained by dropping the cue lightly down on the rear of a ball, driving it forward a few inches. The retrograde motion the stroke behind its centre will convey should then get to work, and cause it to return towards the player. As I have already pointed out, the more preliminary play the cue has the cleaner and smarter will be the impact with the ball. Practise in this fashion until you have gained some mastery over the latter, and have acquired some notion of the swerve it takes on the return back towards you. There is no need to send it on to an object-ball. Just try the retrograde effect with the cue-ball alone. Get the cue up as high as you can, and *the wielding hand right above the shoulder* (which is the real secret of getting a direct return), or as nearly so as this form of the piqué will allow ; for it is most difficult

to make the ball come straight back when an object-ball is not encountered. By getting the wielding hand right over the shoulder, and as close to the head as you conveniently can, you give the ball the line from the cue-butt which sends it out straight from you, and should, if the retrograde force acts, return it in the same line to you. The further the wielding hand is held away from the shoulder the more uncertain is the return curve made by the ball. This, however, is treading on to the massé ground too quickly.

The plain piqué is in point of fact quite an easy stroke. Like everything else, practice is the chief requisite for the player to grasp its true inwardness. The direct return from a ball lying close to it will be found a very simple matter, quite as much as a straight "screw-back" with a horizontal cue is. But in both cases the divergences to left or right of the direct recoil ask for considerable judgment. The player has to gauge the angle—the most awkward obstacle to surmount in connection with all "screw" strokes. Therefore it is well to vary the full-ball stroke on the object-ball with others at three-quarter ball, half-ball, down to the very thinnest contacts. Each separate contact will throw the cue-ball back at a distinctive angle. A very wide area may be covered in this way, more, indeed, than the piqué has ever as yet, to my knowledge, been utilized for in English billiards.

Fig. 11 illustrates a ball with a ring above, which is intended to represent the top strikable face as the player looks down upon it when in the act of making a piqué or massé. The words "FORE" and "AFT" respectively show the front and the rear of this strikable face. With

the cue raised aloft, a blow aft of the central point will induce a recoiling action, providing that the cue is inclined somewhat to the player, as on Fig. 10. For the piqué the cue-butt must be held directly in the line

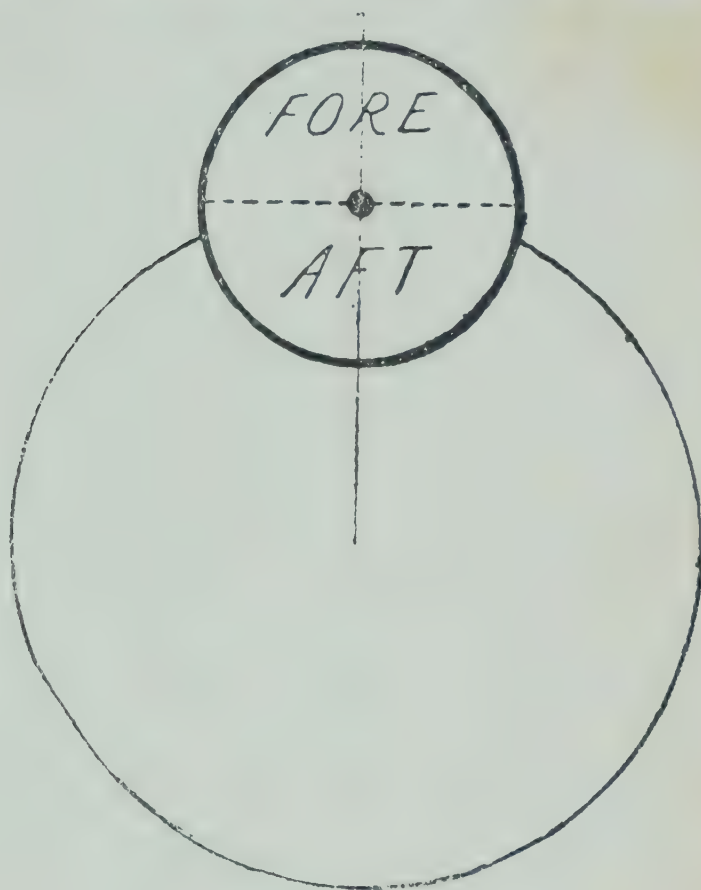


FIG. 11.—The top strikable face of a ball.

that the ball is intended to take. Fig. 12 gives a full view of a ball being piquéd, and the part it should be struck on (the line of black dots aft of the centre-point). Whichever way the player faces the ball, he should hold the cue straight above it (*the wielding hand right above the shoulder*). By turning this diagram about in every possible direction, a good idea of what is necessary should be gained from it.

As an instance of what the piqué may accomplish, I show on Fig. 13 a stroke made in a recent Amateur

Championship game. This is a piqué pure and simple, and a very fine losing-hazard shot. The conception was good, and the execution in keeping with it. I do not think any of the big professional players would have essayed it, yet the amateur did with the greatest confidence. It placed him in the way of making a break of

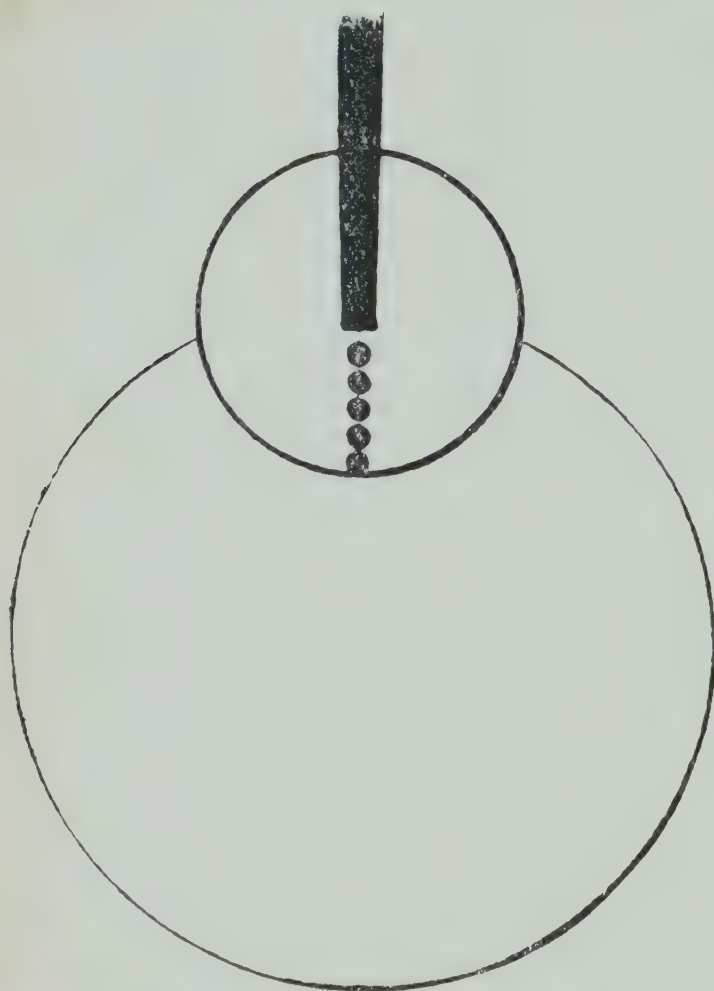


FIG. 12.—Showing when the ball has to be struck for a piqué (behind its top-centre), and the line of the cue's descent.

well over fifty points. I only cite this instance of a clever, and very accurately played, long-range piqué to point out what an extremely valuable factor it may become when thoroughly mastered.

Some years ago there was a much-favoured “trick-stroke,” which took the form of placing a piece of money

on a ball ; the player's ball was set close beside it, and the third ball several feet away from either. The thing

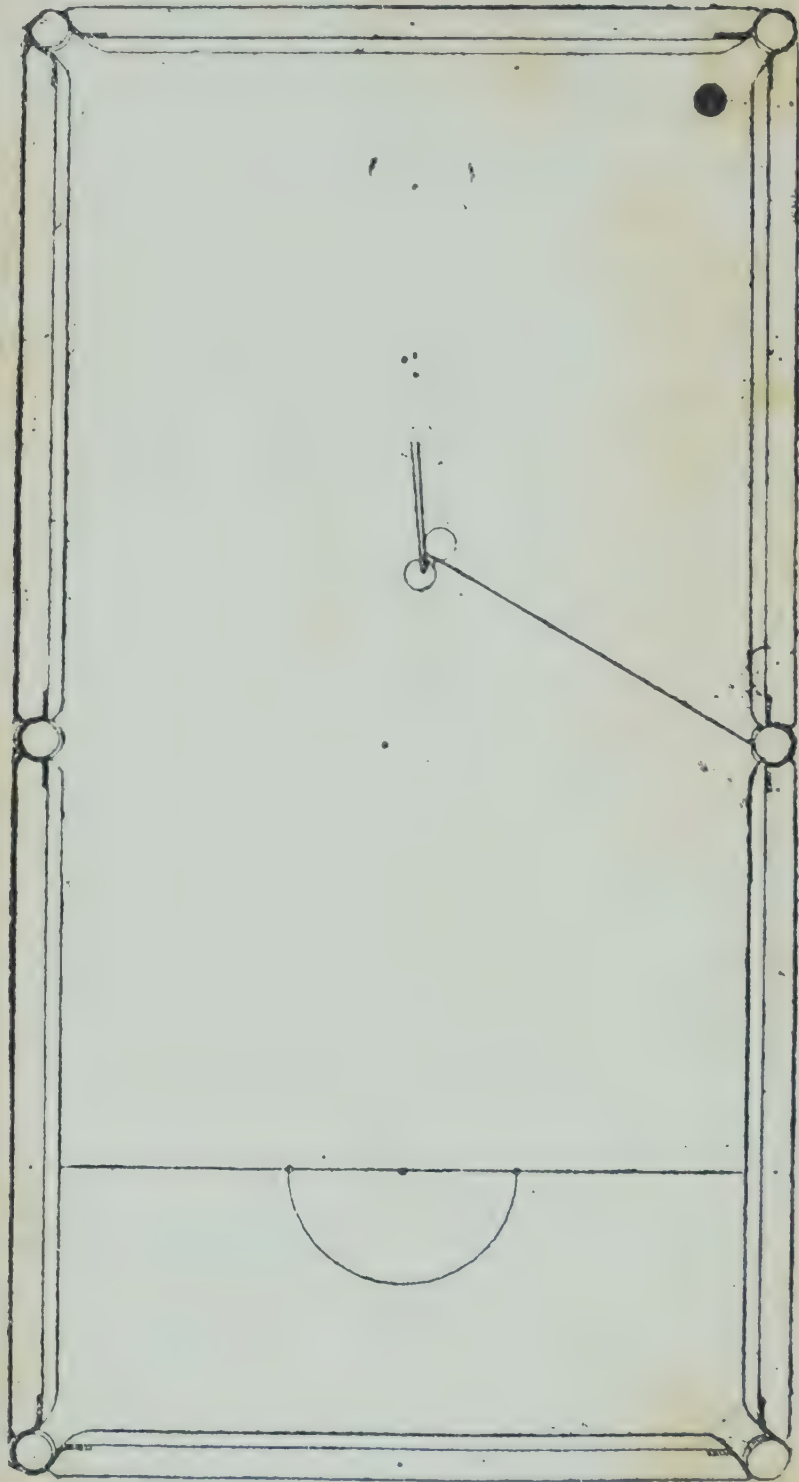


FIG. 13.—A stroke made in an Amateur Championship heat, showing the possibilities of the piqué.

to be done was to cannon from the ball holding the

piece of money without knocking the latter off. By using the piqué this was quite easily managed. The player got his cue-butt up to its greatest height, and then slightly inclined the cue-point towards him. Several snappy little preparatory ups and downs he made before dropping the cue on his ball, which, when hit, barely moved the ball holding the money, to skid back and cannon. This stroke accentuates the lesson I pointed out earlier in this chapter, viz. that the played object-ball may be left almost in the position it stood in, or made to travel as far as the cue-ball, according to the elevation of the cue-butt. The higher the latter is raised the more power goes into the cue-ball, and less force is communicated to the first-played object-ball.

For the short range the "bridge" hand may be allowed to rest upon the table. The longer-range ones, however, require such greater pace in the cue-ball that it must be raised quite a foot above the level of the cushions. In playing all of them, remember you have to strike the cue-ball centrally.

Excellent practice for the piqué is to be found by

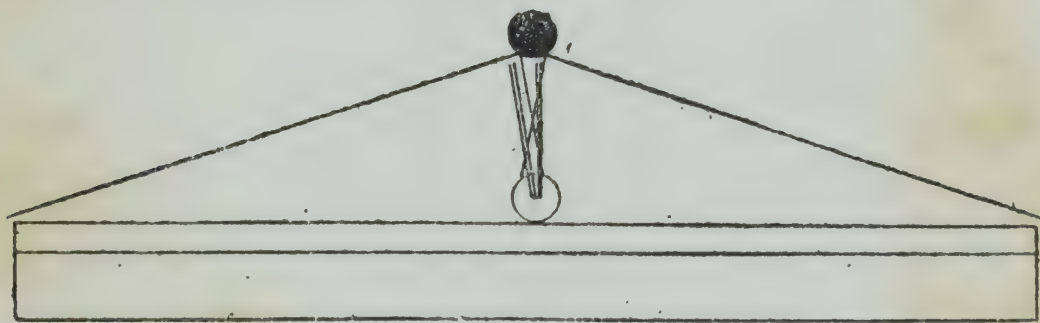


FIG. 14.—Piqué practice-strokes.

placing the red ball on the billiard-spot, with the cue-ball directly behind it on the top cushion (as on Fig. 14). Try a straight recoil back from the red to the spot you

play the cue-ball from. Then, to gain an idea of what angles other than full contacts throw, try to make a losing hazard in either corner pocket. Something like a half-ball stroke on the red will bring this about. This practice will provide many a useful lesson.

THE MASSÉ STROKE.

The elegant, refined massé stroke is a combination of "screw" and "side." By its agency a ball is made to take a sinuous, whirling, curving path which, in itself, is a thing of beauty, and a veritable joy to the amateur. The action of a masséd ball is just a parallel to the spinning of a ball between the thumb and forefinger. Every billiard-player must know of the brilliant curves and swerves, extraordinary recoils, and other effects which may be accomplished in this manner. To compare the cue and the bed of the table with the thumb and forefinger is to show, in the plainest way, how these things are imitated by means of the massé stroke. In either instance the ball is pinched, or squeezed, between two conflicting forces, which convey to it an eccentric movement when released.

Where the massé differs from the piqué is also simple of explanation. The massé is an intricate arrangement of two rotatory forces—"screw" and "side"—and the piqué just a plain, straightforward (or, perhaps, I might have said straight-backward) "screw." For the piqué the wielding hand is held right above the player's shoulder, directly above the cue-ball. But for the massé delivery it is thrown wide of the shoulder (as on Plates II. and IV.). At once, therefore, by this different disposition



Plate II.—THE MASSÉ-STROKE—METHOD OF HOLDING THE CUE, AND THE TRIPOD FORMATION OF THE “BRIDGE” HAND.

of the wielding arm and hand, a fresh line of action is given to the cue. Instead of attacking the cue-ball in a straight line, it does so at a tangent. Here, at once, is an example of cross-cueing, and, therefore, a communication of "side," notwithstanding that the ball is struck on almost the same point as in the piqué. The alteration of the line of the cue-butt alters the direction given to the cue-ball. Raised almost to the perpendicular, the cue-point descends and pinches it against the bed of the table, inducing a pronounced curving action to the ball. The direction of the cue-butt sends it out in the true line of the cue's impulse to begin with. Then the retrograde, enforced by the stroke behind its centre, and in a much lesser degree the "side" it carries, draws the ball around in a sort of half-circle. Fig. 15 illustrates masséd, curling balls, showing approximately the point on which it should be struck, the elevation of the cue, and the curve. Fig. 16 shows how these curves can be applied to a cannon with the three balls in a straight line.

Before going further into massé effects, and their causes, I will try and give some practical instruction as to the playing of these strokes. In the first place, one of the chief factors is the formation of a correct massé "bridge." This really prime necessity is hardly comprehended by our professionals, for among them all I have only seen one, or at the most two, who have appreciated the fact. Any rough, slipshod kind of "bridge" is good enough for the great majority. They overlook that this is not so with the more simple strokes, when the cue-butt is not raised at all. And if a good "bridge" is then needed, it is doubly imperative when the cue-butt goes aloft.



FIG. 15.—Various massé curves, and the descent of the cue-point.

I have myself devised a "bridge" which I consider the one best suited to play on an English ball with. Its chief advantage lies in the fact that from it the cue is permitted to attack the ball from a greater height when

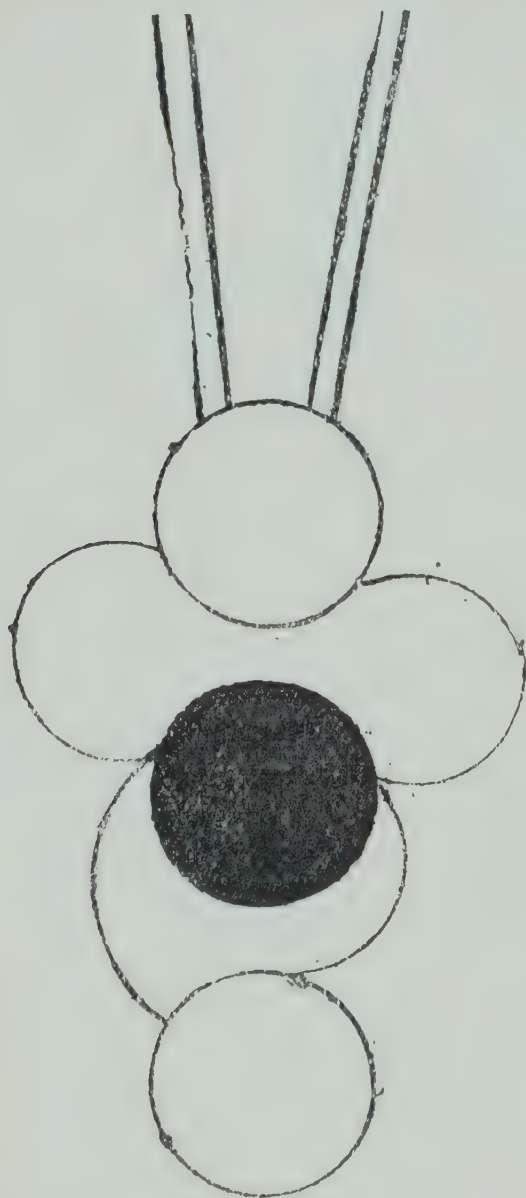


FIG. 16.—Curving a ball around for a cannon on both sides of the object-balls.

the hand is on the table than the ordinary "bridge" allows. A tripod is made with three fingers, while the forefinger and thumb are uplifted above them, the top joint of the latter digit being crooked out to support the

cue (as on Plates II. and IV.). The "bridge" hand is screwed around until the outer side directly faces the player's body, with the thumb side facing the cue-ball. It is an uncomfortable position to hold the hand in at first. Not until I had been continually practising with it for quite three months did I begin to retain it in shape for any length of time without experiencing pain and inconvenience. Now, however, it is as easy to me as any other "bridge." The cue is supported between the thumb and forefinger (as shown on the photographs), really resting on the former, and running over the back of the hand. The player's head is placed as closely to the cue as he can get it to there. He looks down the line of the cue to that point of the ball's strikable face where his own judgment tells him he has to strike. The cue is suspended, as may be seen, between the thumb and forefinger of the wielding hand—not held, but lightly balanced on them. Its real support comes with a pressure upon the thumb of the "bridge" hand. This is the most delicate manner of holding the cue and applying those light touches which are the feature of the *massé* and *piqué* strokes. There should be no gripping of the cue-butt, for by this means the life is taken out of the shot. The "bridge," made with the hand on the table, serves equally well for the *piqué* as for the *massé* strokes. The great thing to be taken notice of is the screwing around of the thumb side of the hand from the body. In this proceeding do not forget that the hand must be kept steady when it has reached its proper position.

The "bridge" with the hand on the table can only cope with strokes at shortish range, no matter how much life one gives to the cue by preliminary up-and-down



Plate III.—THE GRAND MASSÉ, WITH THE “BRIDGE” HAND LIFTED ABOVE THE TABLE TO PUT GREATER POWER INTO THE STROKE.

movements (as vital in the massé stroke as in the piqué). It has its limitations of range, owing to the comparatively small height that it falls from on to the cue-ball. In this respect there is a comparison to be made with the cue lying flatly over the table and the very slight movement made by the wielding arm. The one, however, keeps the run of the ball within a limited area, and in the other the skill of the player has to control it. With one's cue-power under great restraint in playing massé shots when the "bridge" hand is on the table, compensation comes with the gentle touches that may be given, and which are invaluable in keeping the balls together during close-cannon play, etc. To obtain a greater run on a masséd (or a piquéd) ball, the "bridge" hand has to be lifted from the table (see Plate III.). The "bridge" arm is pressed against the body, the elbow touching the hip-joint, to keep it steady, and the cue buckled through the forefinger. Many Continental players hook their thumbs in their waistcoat pockets, and others place them in their waistcoat button-holes, to gain the necessary steadiness of the "bridge" arm. With these "bridges" the cue is given a longer sweep above, and down to the ball it plays on. The extra leverage brings a much greater force to bear on, and imparts considerably more force to, the ball than when played over a tabled "bridge" hand. And at all long ranges in connection with the massé or piqué the hand must be lifted off the table. With the hand on the table the strokes are called a *petit massé*, or *petit piqué*. Raised off the table, however, they rise to the distinction of being *grand massés*, or *grand piqués*.

I am not an advocate of billiard-players carrying a

bag of cues about, as do golfers their clubs for every class of stroke, but I certainly am very strongly of the opinion that the ordinary cue is by no means an ideal one for coping with the *massé* or *piqué*. In the first place, to play these strokes one has to hold it somewhere below, or at any rate at the end of, the splicing. Seeing that the butt-end of cues are generally loaded, apart from the greater amount of wood in them, they have at once a tendency to become "top-heavy" when one raises the cue-butt aloft. The weight at the top prevents the cue being raised to the perpendicular for the length of time that is needed to get the needful impulse for the stroke. The shorter a man's height the more does this tell against him. What he needs is a cue of less length, one that he can easily handle and control, with more weight forward. I have invented a *massé* cue on this principle. It is only some two-thirds of the length of the ordinary cue, and the gain all players experience with it in their *massé* and *piqué* strokes is almost incredible. I have had it weighted to seventeen ounces, with the weight well inclining to the point of the cue; and to all who aspire to *massé* play I unhesitatingly urge the use of a cue of this model. There is nothing in the rules of billiards debarring the use of any cue or cues, no matter their length, shape, weight, or make, so long as they are formed to hold a cue tip. Plate IV. gives an idea of this short *massé* cue.

Fig. 17 should be compared with Fig. 12, as it distinguishes the *massé* from the *piqué* in the plainest possible fashion. Instead of the cue being held perpendicularly above the ball, as in the *piqué*, it makes the stroke from a tangential line, the cause being



Plate IV.—USING THE SHORT MASSÉ CUE.

. Another aspect of the “bridge” hand, showing more plainly how it is screwed around towards the cue-ball.

the throwing out of the wielding arm wide of the shoulder.

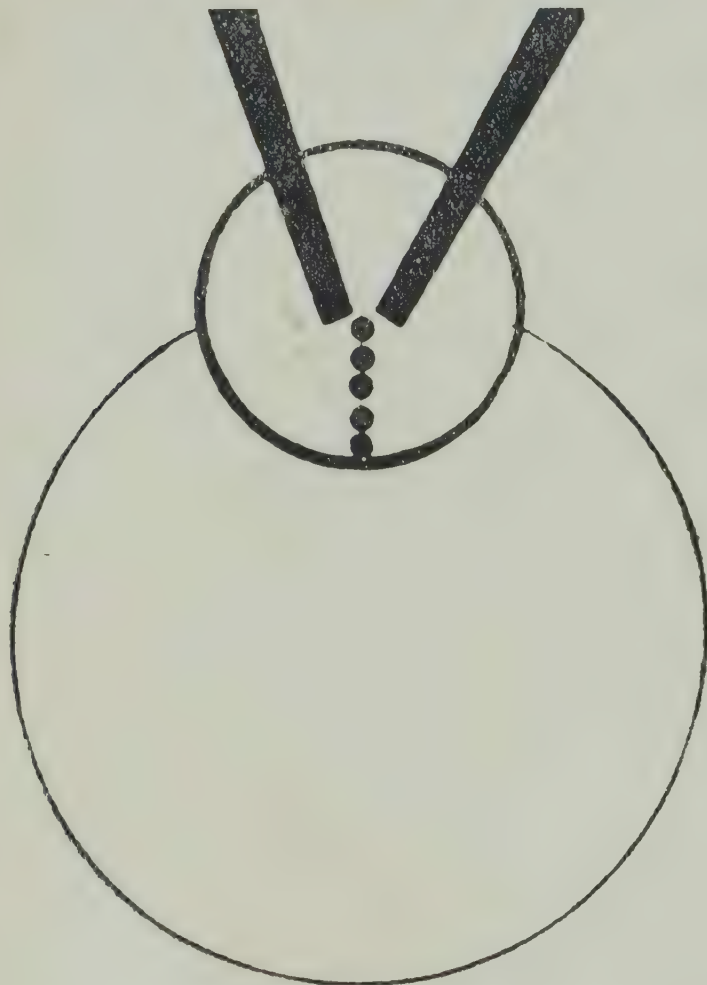


FIG. 17.—As distinguishing the massé from the piqué when the cue-ball is struck directly behind its top centre.

Fig. 18 shows a masséd cannon. The aspect of the stroke is as made towards one watching it. This cannon is played almost as perfectly as it possibly could be, for the balls are left well together, the cue-ball commanding the other two completely for another cannon. For, as in other strokes, the massé, to be properly played, must leave a good after-position. Every cannon should be handled so as to keep the player in easy possession of the table for the next stroke. And, scientifically applied, the massé's mission

is not only to make the score, but to "leave" the balls well. How many of our players can truthfully say that this is their motive? The truth is, they play the massé so poorly that so long as the score is made they are

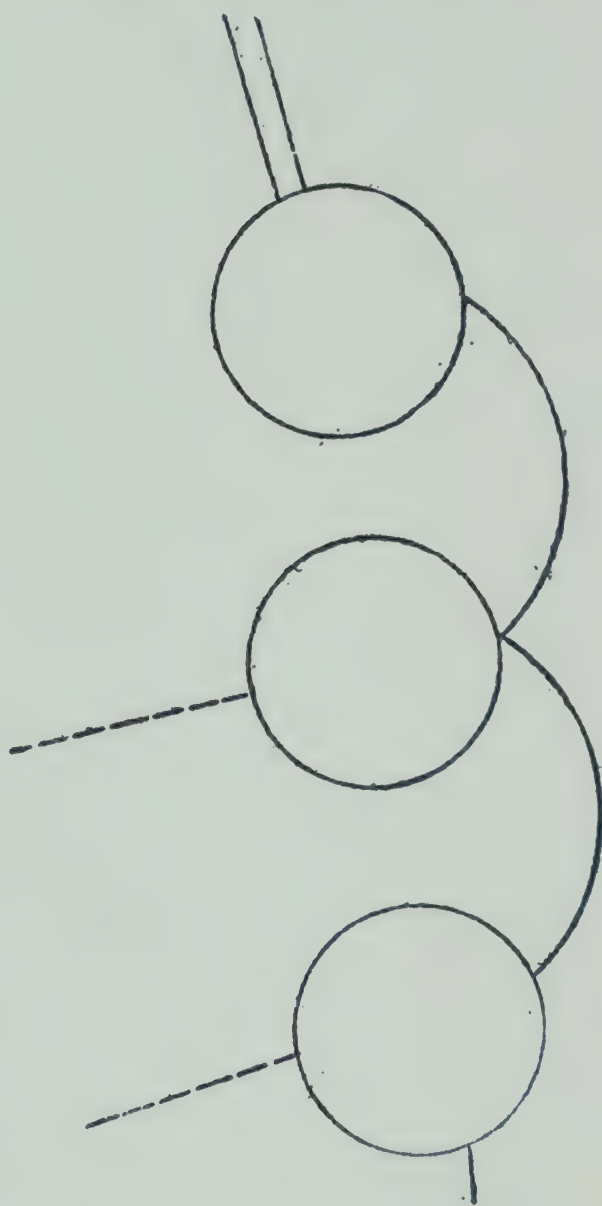


FIG. 18.—A well-played massé cannon, the first object-ball being so hit as to leave good after-position.

satisfied, no matter how the balls are left. Some of our best professionals may not inaptly, in this after-positional respect, be placed on a par with the veriest tyro at the game. As long as they score they are

content. Therefore, as a counterpoise to the perfectly played cannon on Fig. 18, I show an imperfect playing of the same stroke (see Fig. 19). This takes the shape of the cue-ball curving out too far and coming

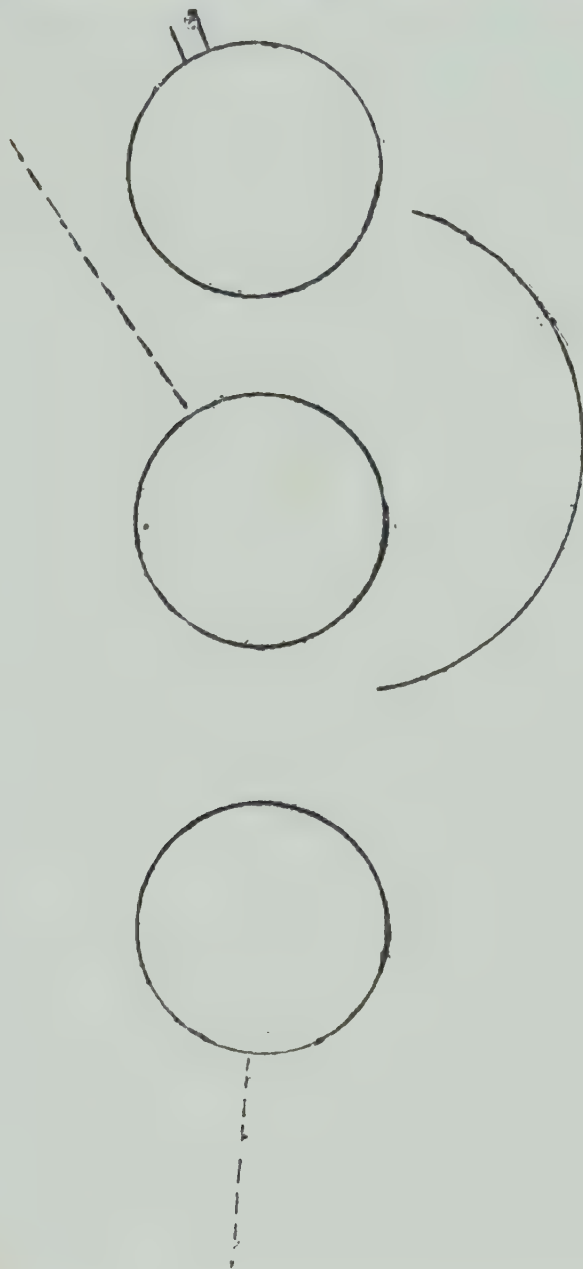


FIG. 19.—An imperfectly played cannon by the massé stroke. The object-balls are split apart.

around to split the balls, in place of taking the first object-ball and then the second, as on Fig. 18. The object-balls are split apart, contrary to the best principles

of cannon play, and the after-position] is precarious

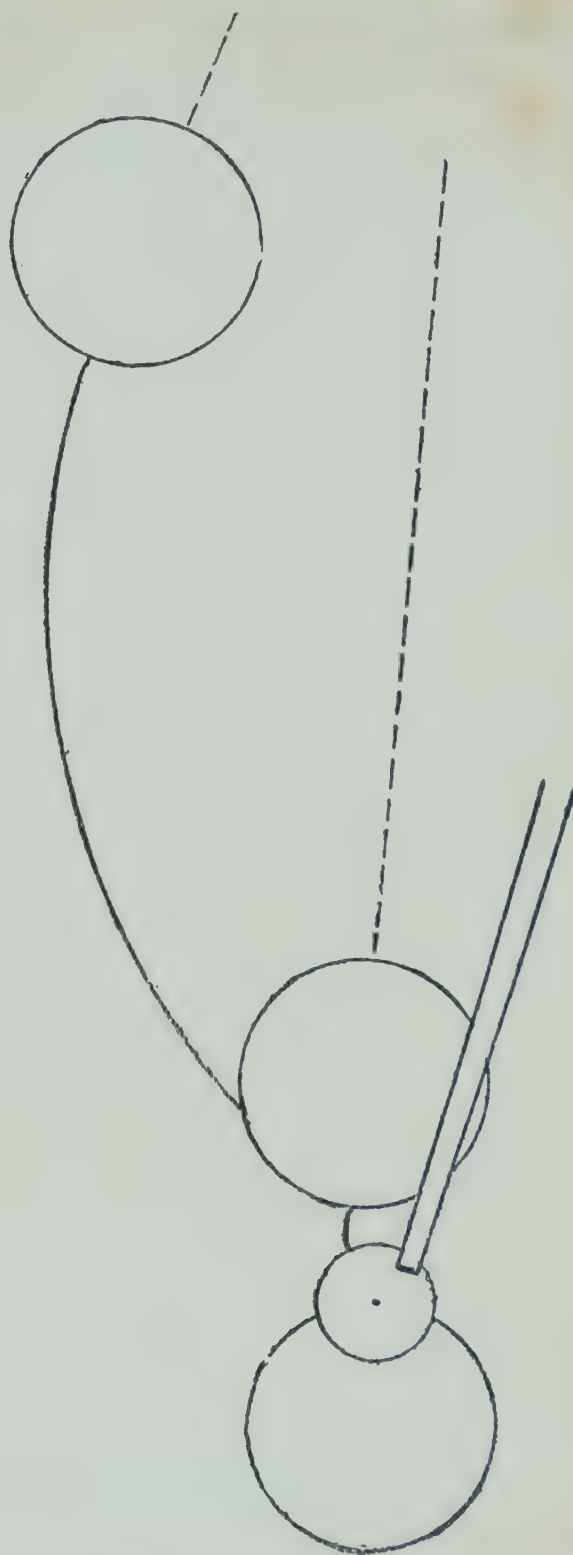


FIG. 20.—A forward massé (the cue-ball struck to the fore of its top centre) perfectly played.

indeed. This exposition of correct and incorrect

handling of a massé cannon is merely founded on the ordinary lines of cannon-play—the first object-ball has to be driven forward to go in company with the second object-ball.

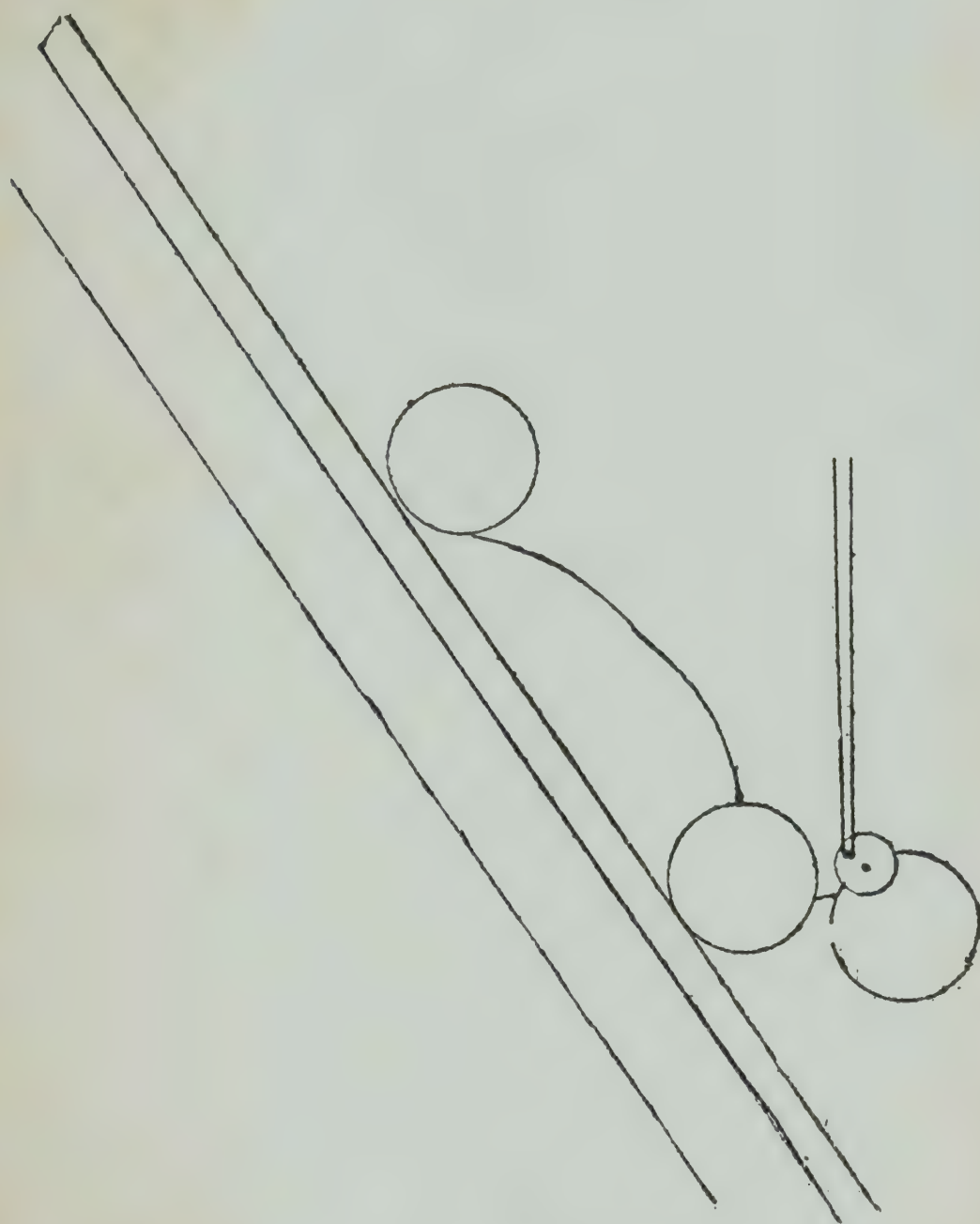


FIG. 21.—Another forward massé.

A very good idea of a well-played massé cannon is also shown on Fig. 20. The first object-ball is driven forward, and on to, the second object-ball, the cue-ball

following through. This stroke is a forward massé, the cue-ball being struck to the fore of its top centre, and the result is equivalent to the use of top in the ordinary way. The cue-ball is given a much greater length of

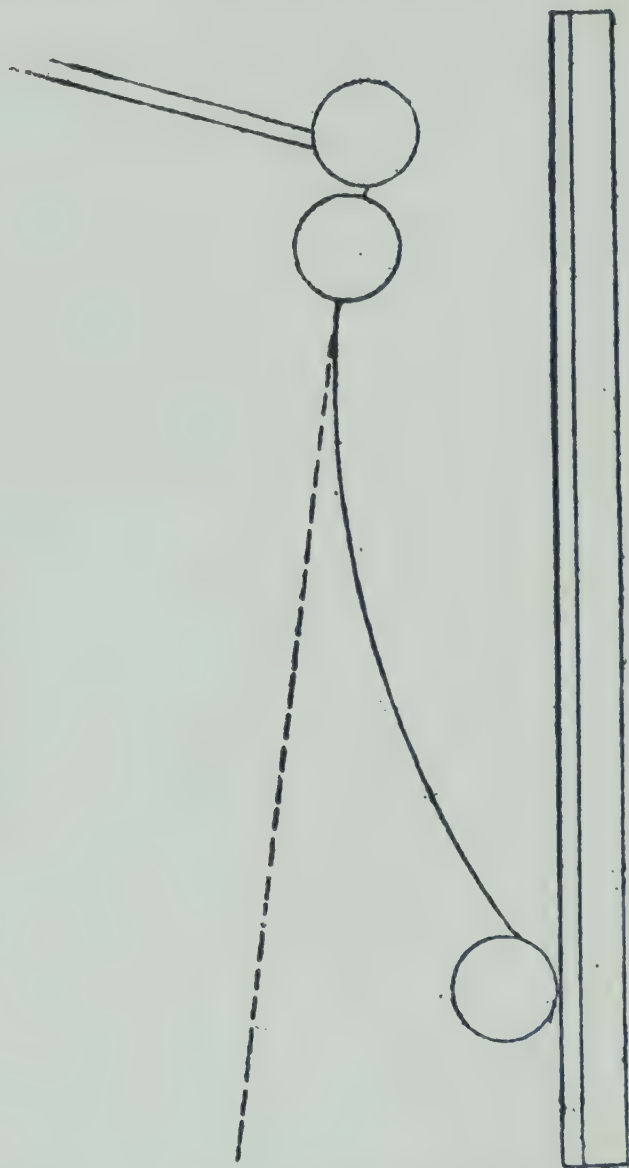


FIG. 22.—A forward massé from another aspect.

run than would be possible if it had been struck aft. As can be seen, the two object-balls are left in front of the cue-ball.

Two other forward strokes are given on Figs. 21 and 22. Both show the cue-ball and first object-ball

lying very near to each other. Again the value of the massé at close quarters is displayed. With the cue in the horizontal line the push is inevitable, but with the cue raised as high as the character of the stroke will admit—it must incline slightly from the player to the ball to give the necessary direction—the stroke not only becomes possible, but quite easy. As Fig. 21 illustrates, the cue-ball is hit to the left of its strikable face, and well to the fore of its centre. This is again (as is the cannon Fig. 22) a run-through massé, driving the first object-ball up to its partner. Fig. 22 gives the direction that the first object-ball takes.

Reverting to the “aft” strokes, the most delicate of

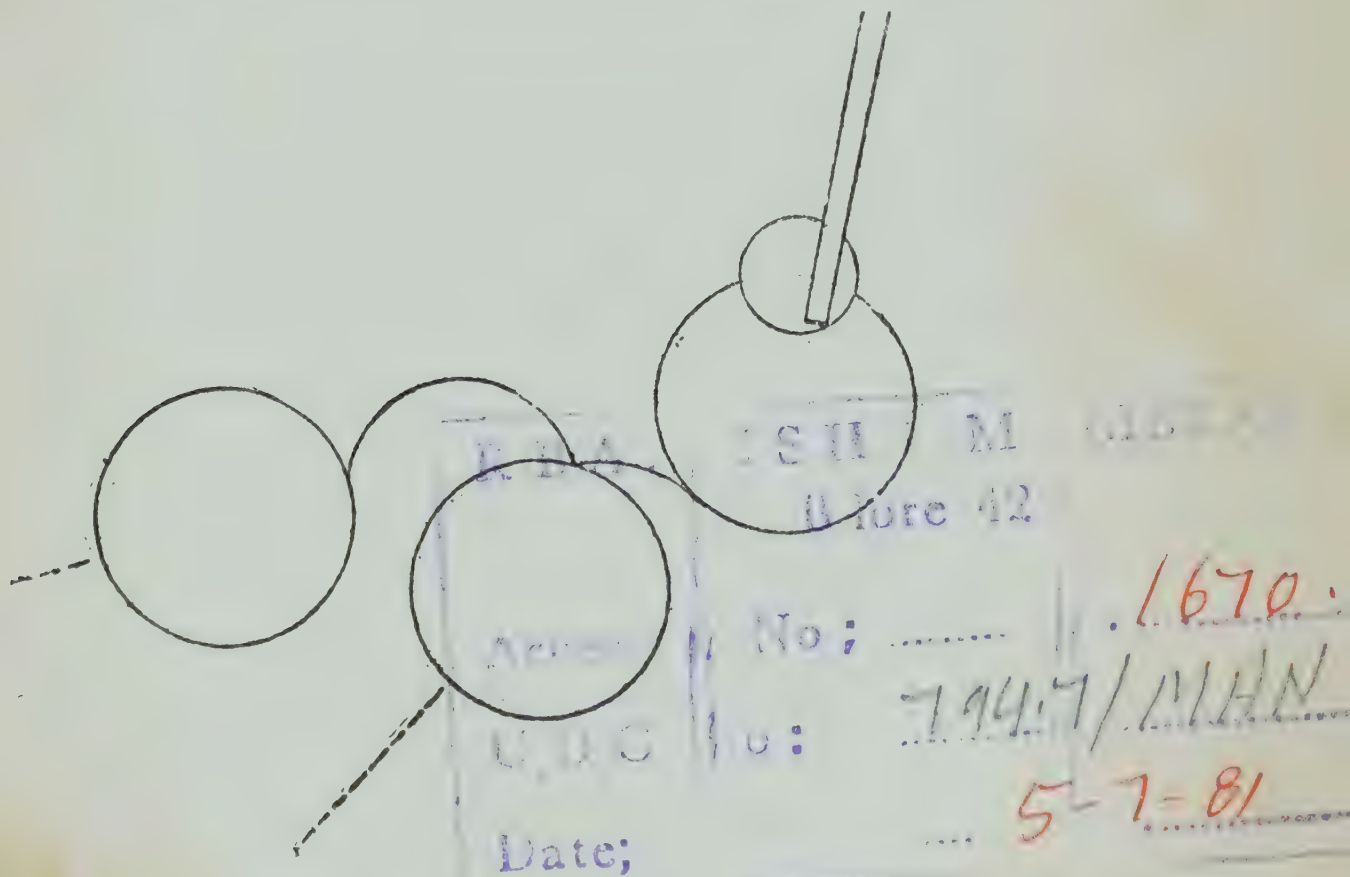


FIG. 23.—The “dead-ball” massé.

them all is that technically known as the “dead-ball”

massé. It is employed in the course of close-cannon play along the cushions, and when the minimum of pose only is required to be used. Such a stroke is presented on Fig. 23, with a view of that part of the cue-ball struck—extreme aft of its top centre. The cue-butt is raised to its greatest possible height, and the touch on the ball as light as it can be—the mere weight of the cue, in fact. Like all very delicate strokes, the “dead-ball” massé requires much practice before the requisite force can be gauged, let alone played.

On Fig. 24 there are given a selection of pocket strokes accomplished by the aid of the massé, each in turn exemplifying some of its possibilities. Inside the baulk-line the cue-ball and red ball lie closely together by the left corner pocket, and the object-white by the right corner pocket. Say that such a position came before a good massé-stroke player. As can be seen, the putting down of the red ball is an impossibility with the cue used in the ordinary way—flat above the table, or as nearly so as the cushions will permit. To “squeeze” in the pocket off the red is to “leave” a double baulk. To go in off the white in the opposite corner pocket is merely holding up a hostage to fortune, although plainly enough “the game” to play, as ordinary players go. Had a skilled massé executant been asked the question as to what course he would pursue, however, there is little doubting that he would elect to put the red down by using the massé. With a gentle touch to the right, and well aft, of his ball, he would have curled it around to get at the spot needed to be hit to pocket the red. The player’s ball would then be left in the easiest position to go in off the

object-white. Observe what a transformation a timely

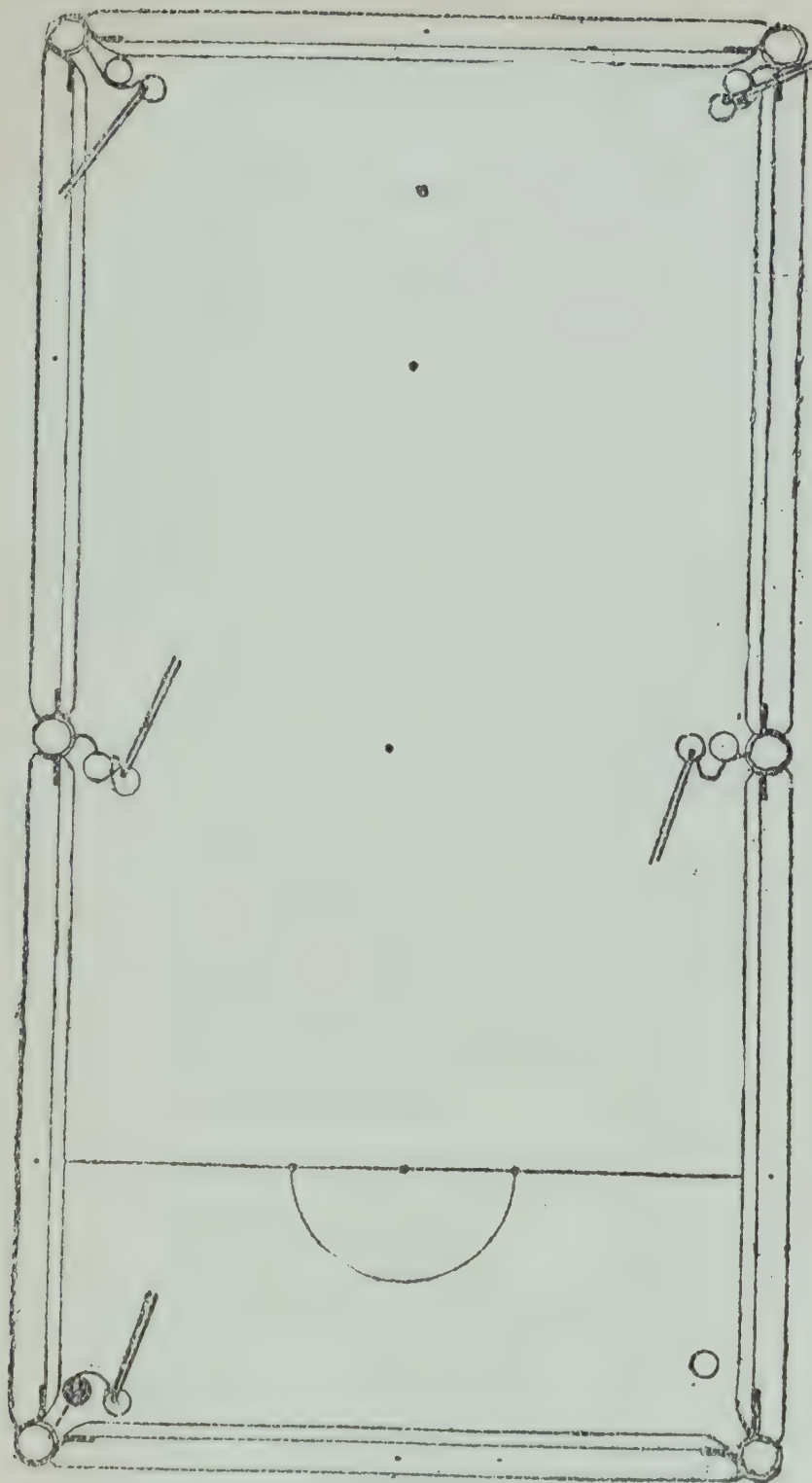


FIG. 24.—A selection of pocket strokes to be accomplished by the massé.

applied massé can work! At once the player finds himself in the train of a prospectively good "break."

The other examples of pocket play by the *massé* in the four upper receptacles of the table frame marked as Fig. 24 are in the nature of losing hazards from the object-white. The latter ball in each instance stands in such a position that the cue-ball is unable to get into the pocket unless it follows the object-ball in there, unless by the circling course the *massé* permits it to take. As may be imagined, a player who can "save the white" when it is so perilously situated as in these four specimened strokes must possess a rare pull over one who would have perforce to put it down, or turn to another stroke. None of the four losing hazards are really difficult. For myself, I can say that I can make any of them in the ratio of five times out of six. And how helpful they are when one is on a "break!"

For *massé*-stroke practice of the short-range order I recommend the placing of the cue-ball on the top cushion behind the billiard-spot with the object-ball slightly in front of it, and the red ball on the spot (see Fig. 25).

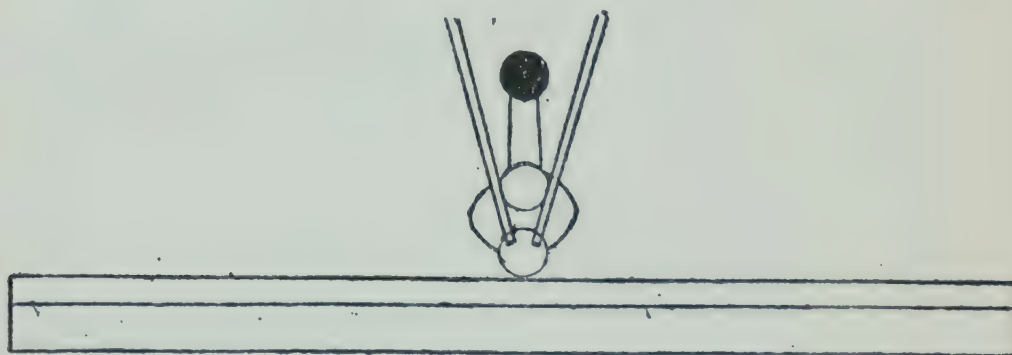


FIG. 25.—*Massé*-stroke practices.

Try and cannon around to the red in both directions, left and right of the object-white. The cue-ball has to be hit well behind its top centre and with the opposite "side" to that which it is travelling; thus, left "side"

working around to the right of the object-white, and right "side" as it curves round the left of it. Give the

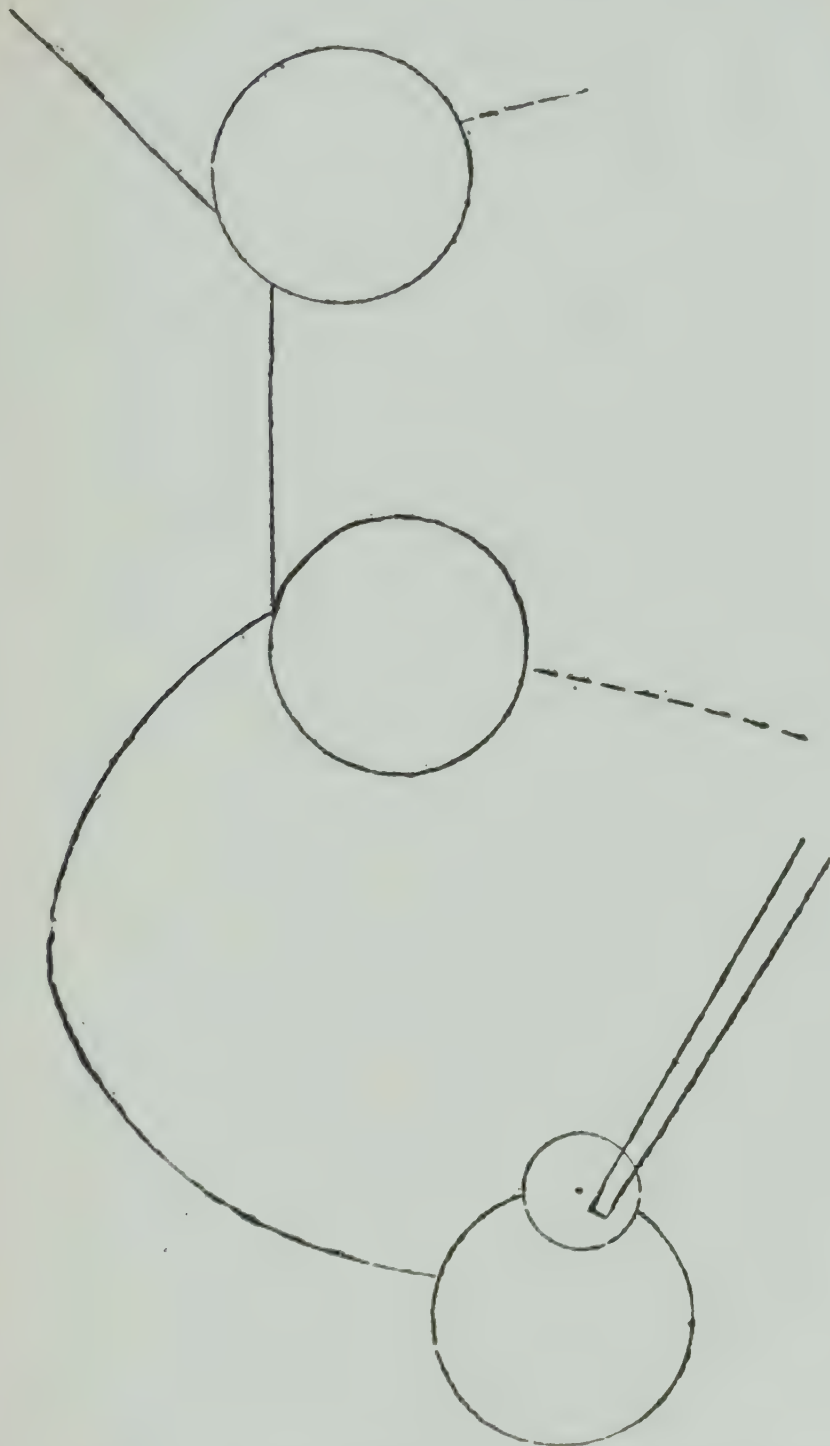


FIG. 26.—*Grand massé* ("bridge" hand raised from the table) at moderate range.

ball a direction wide of the object-white, allowing the natural curve it should take to bring it back on to

the latter. Get the cue-butt well up in the air, and move the cue up and down as rapidly as you can before

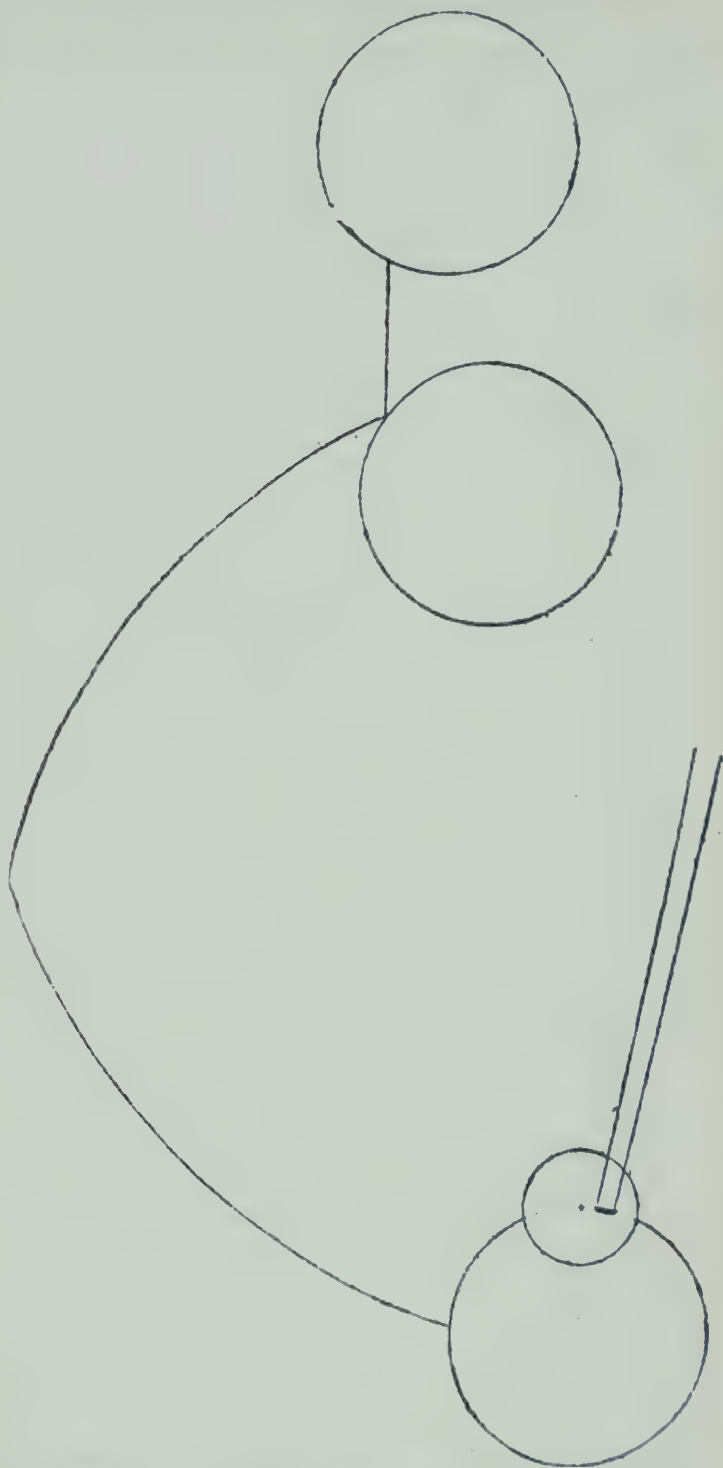


FIG. 27.—*Grand massé* at a longer range.

making the stroke, which should be as light a one as you can give. When you have made the true impact

with the cue-ball you will feel the cue "bite" as sharply and crisply as it does in the ordinary "screw" shots.

A trio of *grand massé* strokes are given on Figs. 26, 27, and 28. The first is at medium range, the second

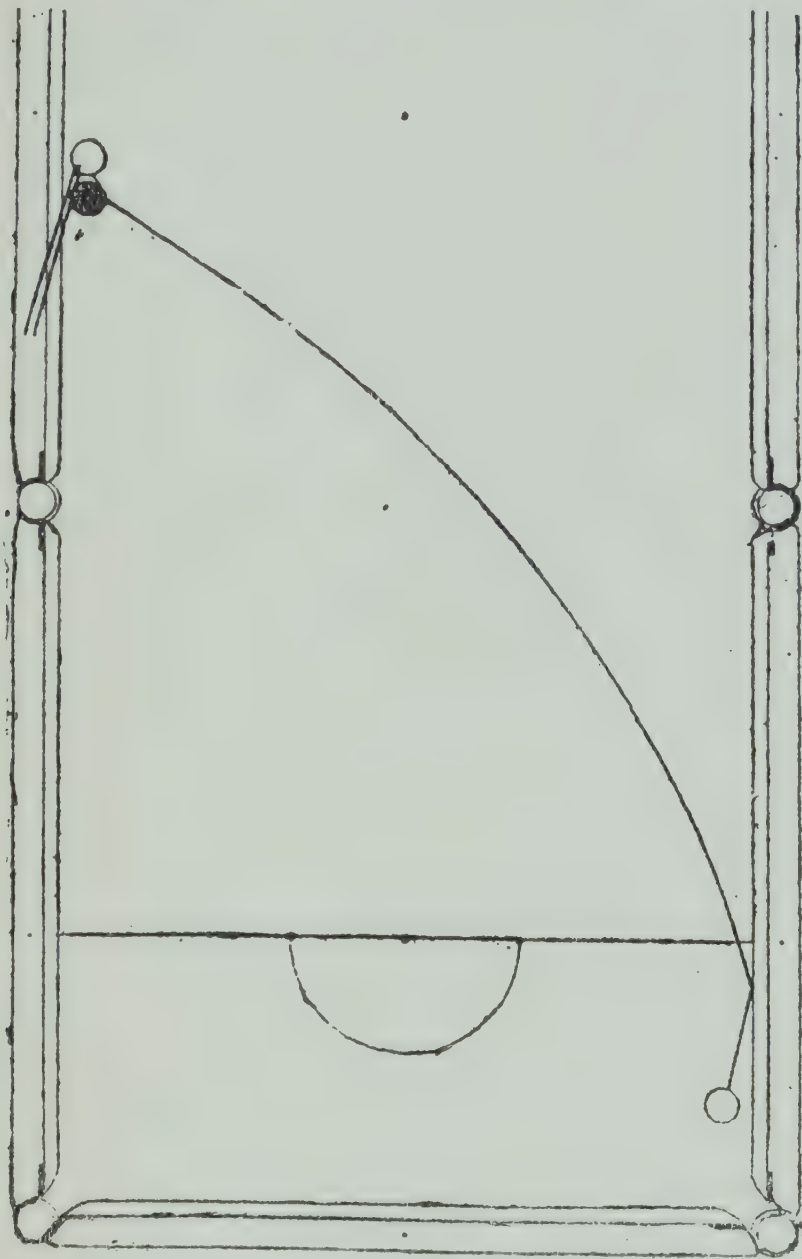


FIG. 28.—A very long-range *grand massé*.

somewhat further, and the third at very long range. By the different striking of the cue-ball's strikable face in the two first mentioned, the gradual sending forward of the cue-point is to be seen. On Fig. 26 the stroke

is aft; on Fig. 27, with, as I have said, the cue-ball further away from the object-balls, the cue-ball is hit about the centre of its strikable face to give it a greater run. Fig. 28 affords a much lengthier journey for the cue-ball, and to obtain this it has to be as much to the fore of the top centre as can safely be done. On Figs. 26 and 27 the curve outwards and in again of the player's ball is clearly shown. The player has to judge the length of the curve, and the spot where the *broadest part of the ball's circular course will swing it around on to the object-balls*. He has to give it direction to this point, and to tend to his ball, as I have tried to tell, so that it takes a *massé* curve. These *grand massés*, I need hardly repeat, are made with the "bridge" hand lifted from the table (as on Plate III.).

CHAPTER III

BREAK-MAKING—THE TWO SCORING SYSTEMS

HITHERTO my aim has been to make my readers familiar with the component parts of the cue-ball's workings, and the various processes—plain ball, "screw," "drag," "side," and "top"—by which they are effected. Piece by piece these different motions of the playing-ball are the billiardist's equipment. The reduction or the widening of an angle ; the mastery over the object-ball, and the accompanying command of the table ; the deflection of the ball's natural path, and all the other incidentals to skilful billiards, are only obtainable by such means. The player must never forget what is and what is not the correct position at the table, nor the pendulum movement of the fore-arm which gives the cue its leverage. Also, that the cue should pass over that portion of the table on which the cue-ball has stood to find its resting-place on the surface of the board, and not be jerked in the air, as is the habit of so many players. With this reference to my previous lessons, I now propose to deal with billiards proper—that is, as a game, with the object always in view of scoring the greatest number of points in the easiest manner possible. This, as I have said, is accomplished

by a variety of strokes of the several denominations, which, pieced together, form the structure known technically as a "break."

Now, there are two kinds of games in billiards—the top-of-the-table (a variation, and a pleasing one, of the obsolete spot-stroke) and the old-fashioned losing hazard. The first-mentioned is the cult, and practical monopoly, of the masters of the cue. Its numberless changes of position, despite the limited area of operations between the top pockets, the great delicacy of "touch" it involves, and the enormous experience required, render the top-of-the-table game hopelessly beyond the range of amateur skill. To many shining lights in the professional ranks it has been a striving for the unattainable, has this elusive disposition of the balls by the top cushion. In fact, few of them, to my mind, have shown the necessary talent to be considered really efficient in the intricacies of this most beautiful, but by far the most difficult, form of scoring points. All depends upon the most accurate "strength" imaginable. The countless strokes that can arise from one position, and the danger—always imminent and ever occurring—of the balls "covering," makes, in my pronounced opinion, the top-of-the-table game quite out of the reach of any but the most gifted of billiard-players.

This being so, my recommendation is that the amateur player of every degree of efficiency should unhesitatingly adopt what I term the "losing-hazard" game. In place of having to control the running of three balls, as in the top-of-the-table game, the playing of losing hazards from the D necessitates only the supervision of one ball's—the object-ball—course. How this simplifies the

game I shall show. Then there is the added advantage in losing-hazard play of having the latitude of the baulk half-circle in which to move the cue-ball to the most desirable point obtainable, a matter of incalculable advantage. Compare it with the tremendous difficulty of having to operate from a set position, as the top-of-the-table play enforces ! It hardly bears comparison, does it ? In all respects the losing hazard, both in its ease and the wide margin that is permitted for bad strokes—strokes that score, but are, nevertheless, poorly played—stands out in bold relief as the support of the great bulk of players, amateur or even professional. Lessons have not been wanting in the past two or three seasons of the respective merits of these two best scoring mediums that English billiards have yet known, and, perhaps, will ever know. I have in my mind's eye an amateur championship, in which the rough-and-ready losing hazard wiped the eye of the refined top-of-the-table. Also a money match, in which the pursuit of the latter form of the game cost a seasoned professional "a cool hundred," and an experience of what the losing hazard can accomplish that will probably last him a lifetime. It was not that the seasoned professional was not a better billiard-player than his opponent, for he was all that and a bit more. But he chose to make his game—the top-of-the-table—a very hard one, whereas the younger man stuck as closely as sealing-wax to the losing hazard—the easiest scoring means—as his sheet anchor.

There is not a greater snare and delusion than this top-of-the-table game. It is so deceptive in its superficial appearance, with its relays of simple-looking little

cannons, and its ever-recurring winning hazard. Good to look upon, but deep as unfathomable waters, is the top-of-the-table game. As in other cases, there are exceptions, and these I have pointed out. Personal acquaintance with its devious paths have made me chary of it. I always feel that I am walking on the edge of a precipice when I find myself with the three balls clustering round the top cushion. The outlet from some entanglement, which I know will befall me sooner or later, is the never-failing losing hazard, which transports the cue-ball to what I may be allowed to term its natural haven—the baulk half-circle. My counsel to my readers is to follow out the advice of a man who in his time has won any number of big professional handicaps. He merely said: “They (speaking of the would-be top-of-the-table manipulators) put the red down; I run through it.” And there is more sound sense from a billiard-playing and scoring point of view in those few words than many may imagine. This man was content to go on playing what he knew he could score largely from—the losing hazards—while others were wading about in the depths of the unknown and treacherous top-of-the-table game. Simply put, he invariably found his way back to the D at any and every opportunity. He played a methodical game. His only method was to get his ball “in hand.” “Back to the D again, marker!” one could almost see imprinted all over him. Middle pockets and top pockets were his objective points. How he cut down the more scientific players time and again the records of the game tell.

Before leaving the subject of top-of-the-table play as comparing with losing hazards, I must point out how

one is the essential fall-back of the other when a player has practically lost position. At the top of the table only one stroke will be the means of returning the balls there with any degree of certainty, and that is the losing hazard, which sends one or other of the object-balls down the table to leave a natural-angle cannon. The loss of position in losing-hazard play is retrieved by what is practically the first step in top-of-the-table work—the angle cannon from the D to bring the three balls together on the top cushion. This, though, is the only affinity that the two styles of billiard-scoring bear to one another.

I now propose to deal with the practice of the losing-hazard game, of which the first principle is, of course, that the cue-ball shall be “in hand” and the two object-balls in the field of play. For preference, they should be so disposed as in Fig. 29 to permit of an easy losing hazard being made in either middle pocket, the reason of this simply being the fact that it is infinitely easier to control the balls over the middle pockets than if dealing with top-pocket losing hazards. YOU INVARIABLY MAKE THE STROKE A TRIFLE MORE DIFFICULT THAN THE ORDINARY HALF-BALL STROKE, either by “running through” the object-ball, by cutting it “fine,” or by slightly widening the otherwise easy natural angle of ingress to the pocket. These different methods of dealing with the cue-ball are brought about by the exigencies of position. Position, any kind of desirable position, following the making of a losing hazard, allows of (just as the actual making of the stroke does) considerably more latitude to the object-ball than any other stroke. The plain everyday half-ball shot will not, nor can it,

cope with the requirements of the middle-pocket losing hazards in the matter of controlling the object-ball's running. And to this end nearly every stroke must be so manipulated that the latter will be directed as near the centre of the table as possible. Avoid the cushions as much as you can, for they often lead to the most undesirable positions. Never be content—many players of the average stamp are so—to try and bring the object-ball back over *one* centre pocket. How much and how heavily this kind of performer handicaps himself I can barely imagine. He is generally the type of man who accustoms himself to one table, and, by an acquaintance with the pace of its running, he certainly can make four or five losing hazards in a given middle pocket, and, on occasion, more. Onlookers regard the feat as amazing, and in some respects it certainly is, though more in the way of good fortune than good play. To see the object-ball, as often as not, barely escape touching the shoulder of the top pocket, and come crawling up by the side cushion to stop anywhere within a radius of a foot around the middle pocket, is not a sight for the gods—if any of them are versed in the gentle art of billiards. It stops occasionally by a lucky contact with the protruding shoulder of the pocket, to fall into an easy scoring position. But the performance is never unduly prolonged, for no player, despite the greatest accuracy in his manipulation, can hope to maintain a one-pocket series of losing hazards for any length of time. Only the budding amateur will try to do so, and only the ordinary amateur (countless in his thousands) is the one who never seems to purchase experience, no matter how many examples of the cause of failure his play will daily furnish.

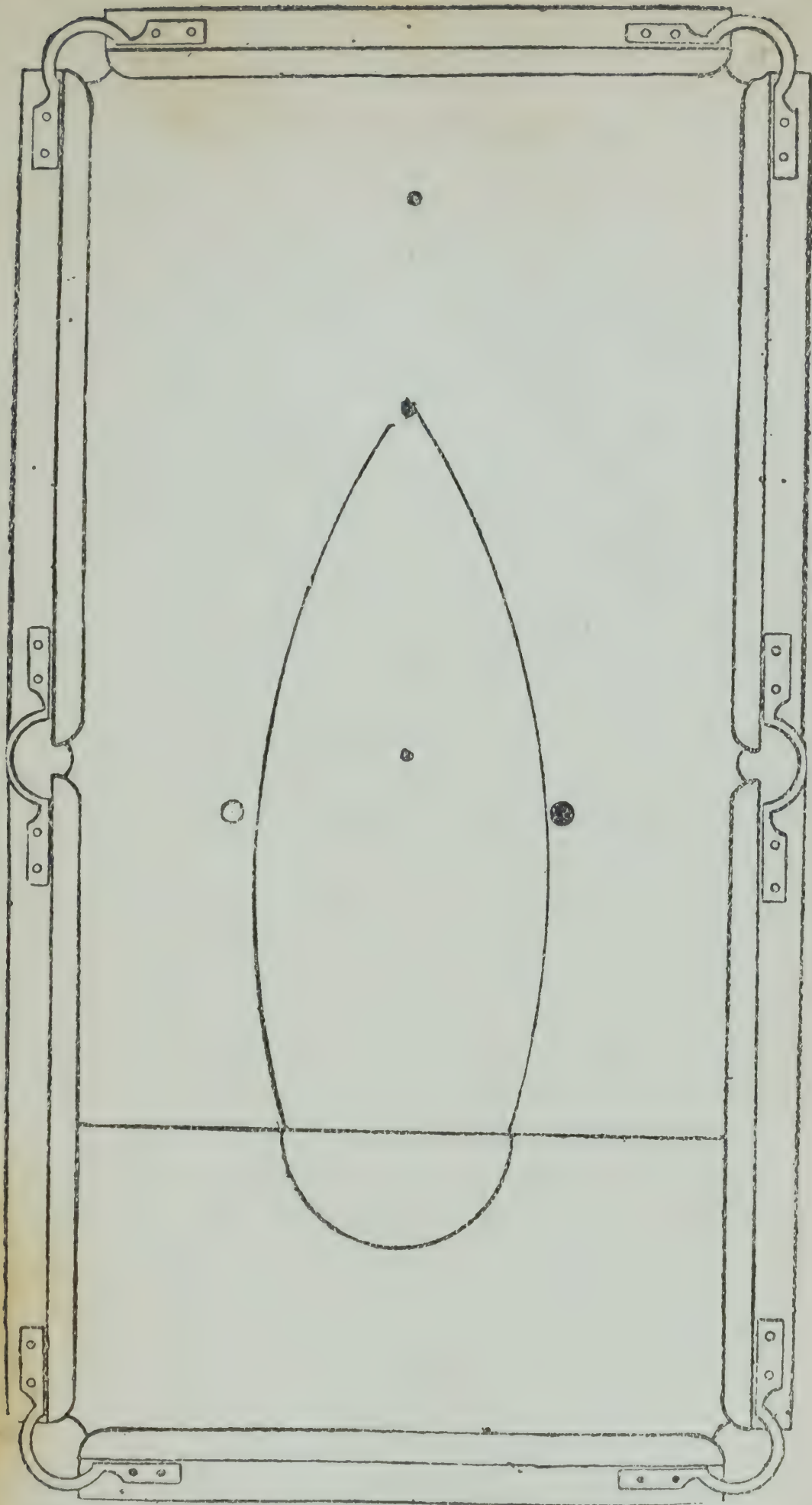


FIG. 29.—The range of the object-ball's resting-place after a losing hazard should be within the boat-shaped lines, extending from the extreme edge of each side of the baulk line, curving around to form the prow at the pyramid-spot. The nearer the centre the better the stroke. Ideal position is that which brings the object-ball immediately in the centre of the table, about a foot below the middle spot, thus giving the player an easy losing hazard in either middle pocket.

THE RANGE OF THE LOSING HAZARD'S OPERATIONS WITH THE CUE-BALL "IN HAND" SHOULD EXTEND TO THE WHOLE OF THE FOUR UPPER POCKETS—the middle and top ones—and not be limited to one pocket only. By keeping the object-ball within the bounds that I show on Fig. 29, all of them will ever be easily open to the cue-ball.

When I say that the range of the object-ball's resting-place, after a losing hazard has been made, should be somewhere within the confines of the torpedo-shaped lines running from either extremity of the D, to converge upon the pyramid spot, I speak more particularly of those scored when the player's ball is "in hand." For when the cue-ball takes up its own standpoint on the table, circumstances often necessitate a gently played "loser," either leaving the object-ball almost where it previously stood, or causing it to "open up" another losing hazard for the next stroke, as the frequently occurring positions on Fig. 29 show.

But the rule is to send the object-ball to the centre of the table, that is, allowing the margin I speak of. And in this respect *direction* of the cue-ball is infinitely more useful to the player than an attempt to bring it to an exact spot after a rebound from the top cushion. *Direction* that brings the object-ball back to stop within the defined area should be the player's aim. But, as I said before, to accomplish this one must almost invariably make a centre-pocket losing hazard more difficult than it would ordinarily be if no attention were paid to the object-ball's course. Still, as this point is the essence of losing-hazard play, it has to be done. Either you have to half run through the object-ball, or to place the cue-ball so that a slightly wider angle than the regulation

"half-ball" one is formed. For *remember, that the succeeding stroke is, or should be, as much the study of the*

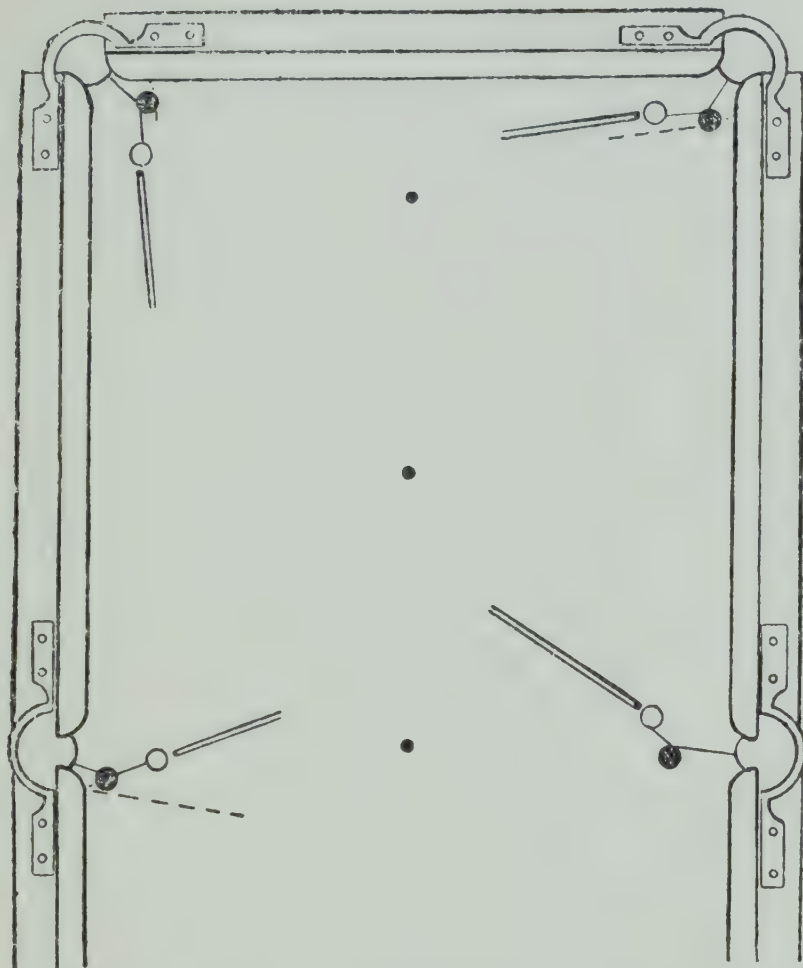


FIG. 30.—Some gently played "losers" leaving the object-ball in position for the subsequent stroke from the D.

player as the one he first plays. That is how breaks are, and ever will be, made.

I consider the most favourable placing of the balls for a losing-hazard break, when the player is operating from the D, to be as on Fig. 31, and I will state the reasons why I consider it such.

At the first blush I am well aware that many, if not most, of my readers, looking at the position of the balls, will imagine that a sequence of losing hazards, indiscriminately scored from either ball in the centre pockets,

is the correct game to play. Well, to put it shortly, that is the popular and, I may say, totally erroneous

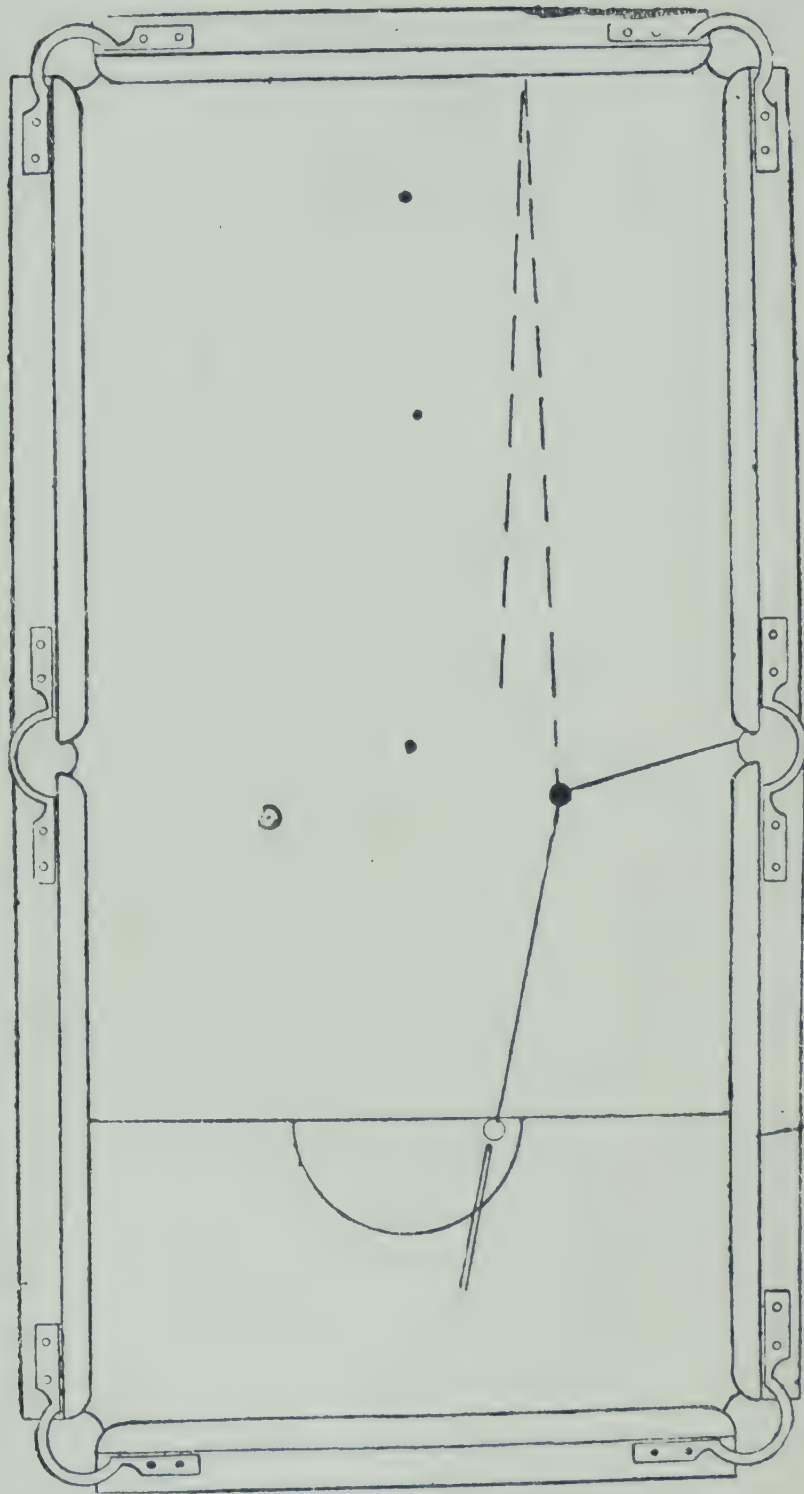


FIG. 31.—The most favourable position for the "losing-hazard break."

view. To try and score from either ball without a fixed motive for so doing is only courting disaster. You may

make a series of losing-hazard strokes ; I don't say you will not. Also, you might be able to bring the object-balls to pretty nearly where they should rest following your strokes. But, all the same, you would be going absolutely counter to the true principles of losing-hazard play. By operating without discrimination as to which is and which is not the proper ball to play upon, you simply have a game quite devoid of foundation, and one which will not bear analysis. In the long run a player, no more skilful than you yourself may be, if he gained the true conception of what was needed, would outpoint you 50 per cent. He would, indeed. He would swamp you with his losing hazards as sure as fate.

The location of the balls on Fig. 29 is that which, in my opinion, conduces to the strongest case that can be made for the losing hazard. Look hard at it, and look long at it, for it is the position you must ever have in your mind as the ideal one. No matter what is left you on the table to make your stroke upon, that is the position you must always try to work up to. "Why?" you will ask. Because you have your SCORING BALL (THE RED) in perfect position and YOUR RESERVE FORCE (THE OBJECT-WHITE) in absolute command of the table in case a mishap occurs to your scoring ball. If by some bad stroke—everybody makes them—you leave the red ball so placed that a losing hazard from it is beyond you, then does your reserve force come into play. Where it stood it was clear of the red ball's running to and from the top cushion into the prescribed area (bounded by the torpedo-shaped lines I mentioned earlier on). So long as there was a probable losing hazard "on" from the red the object-white was not

called into action. It was not wanted. Is it not better to add three points to your score than two, from what are practically identical strokes?

Further, there is an added weakness in tampering more than you are absolutely compelled to do with the object-white ball. Playing top-pocket losing hazards often results in both the cue-ball and object-ball disappearing in the top receptacles. With the red you are granted not only another chance of continuing your break (especially if the object-white still commands the situation), but some additional points. With the disappearance of your object-white away goes one of the most important factors in your scoring. There thus ought not to be any doubt as to which object-ball should figure as the scoring ball. Keep the red in your eye all the time, for it is the main motive power of your scoring peg.

So long as you leave the object-white ball in a favourable position to rescue your red ball from the result of any ill-judged stroke you may have executed, you have an exceptional chance afforded you of continuing your breaks. You may make twenty bad strokes with the red ball (by bad strokes I mean those that will leave the red out of the field of play, though you may have made your losing hazard) during the course of a hundred break, BUT UNLESS YOU MAKE TWO BAD STROKES IN SUCCESSION you can still go on scoring. Your first bad stroke will have been from the red, will it not, leaving it out of the latitude of losing-hazard pocket play? Don't forget that when this happens you still have an easy stroke on, an "in off the white," which you are now forced to play by reason of your poorly

executed previous "loser" from the red. Very well, you now attack the object-white with the sole purpose of getting the red ball into desirable losing-hazard position again. But if in making your stroke off the object-white you also leave that ball unfavourably for the succeeding stroke, either for a cannon on to the red or another losing hazard before again attacking the latter ball, then the two bad strokes in succession have occurred and your command of the table is relinquished. When the balls have so got out of hand the player who bases his game on losing hazards is in dire trouble. He will be fortunate if he can regain the favourite losing-hazard position.

On Fig. 31 I illustrate a losing hazard (made by a half-run-through stroke) from the red ball. The dotted lines show the latter's progress to and from the top cushion. It comes to a place which leaves a losing hazard in the left top pocket "on." You may look longingly at the very much easier "loser" from the object-white into the middle pocket. But overcome all your scruples, and go out for the top-pocket hazard. Don't be afraid of it. Let the thought that you are sacrificing yourself on the altar of method instead of that of chaos nerve you. And every time that the losing hazard from the red ball is a possible, or even a probable, contingency, play it. Sometimes an accident of this sort may happen (see Fig. 32).

The red ball shows no losing hazard of a desirable nature to be possible. The centre pocket is "covered" by the object-white, and the long "loser" into the right top pocket will not answer at all. It would only serve to break up your position if you made it, for the

object-balls would "kiss" and scatter. You must then

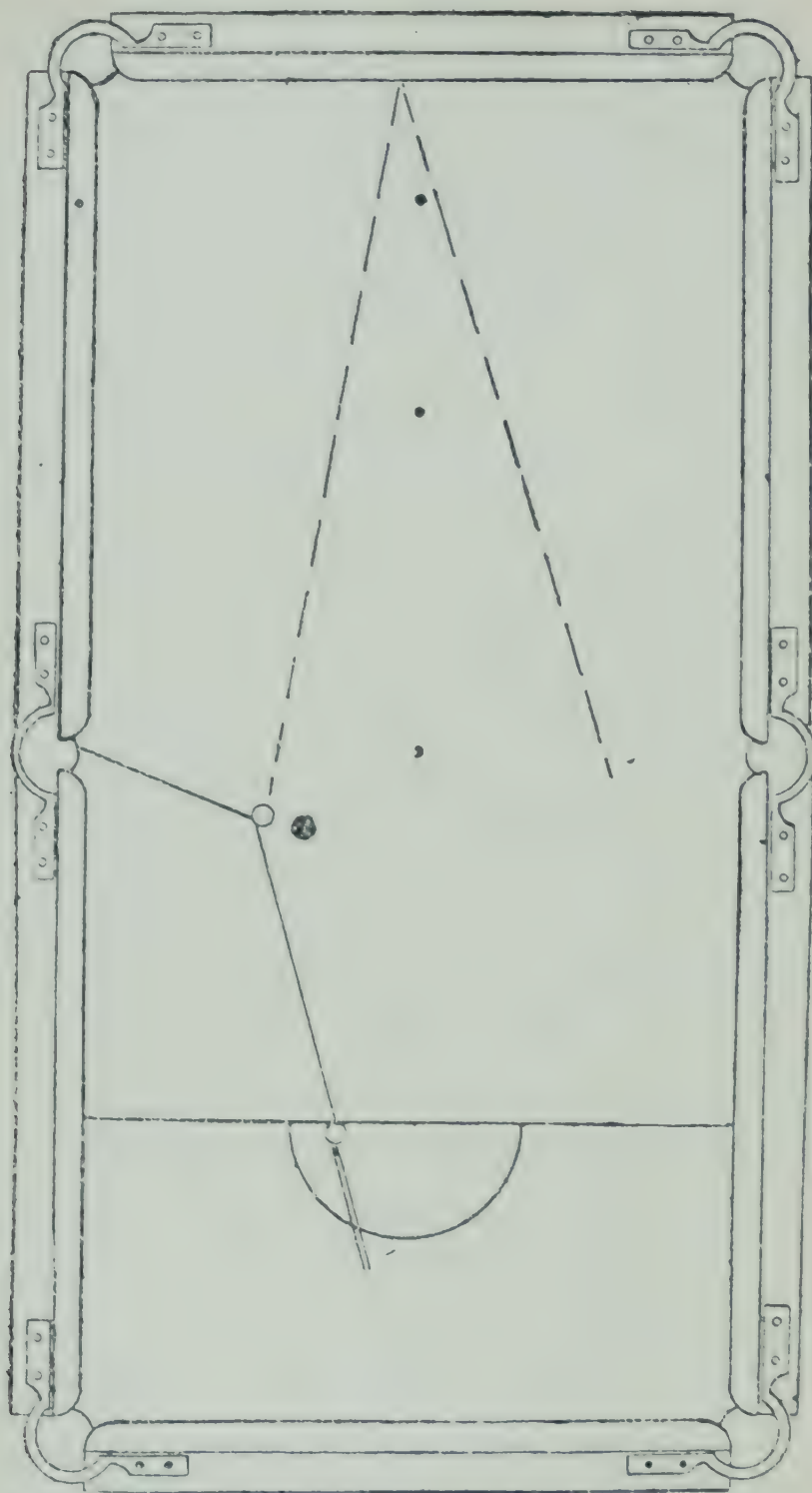


FIG. 32.—Opening up a passage for the "loser" off the red, at the same time trying to get the white nicely placed over the opposite middle pocket.

have recourse to another medium for the prolongation of the break. Now your reserve force (the object-white)

comes to your aid. Simply make the middle-pocket losing hazard from it, and endeavour to send it over the opposite middle pocket by "cutting" it rather sharply in the direction the dotted lines show. By this procedure you have merely reversed the position the object-balls occupied at the outset. Then again you proceed with your losing hazards until such time as the red once more occupies an undesirable position, when your object-white must be called upon again to release you from your difficulties.

I again impress the all-important fact upon my readers, as strongly as I can do, that in playing losing hazards from the D, unless it is an impossibility, of course, they should *always be played from the red ball, and not from the white*. The latter's office is but to guarantee the release of its partner (the red) from any entanglements it may fall into. That is the essence of losing-hazard play.

One other point in the matter of making losing hazards from the white ball is the difficulty attendant upon it when playing from the baulk half-circle. How often has one heard the remark: "I could have easily made the stroke, but I was afraid of losing the white ball!" And a great truth lies in these words. For, as most must know to their cost, that stroke, recognized in the billiard vernacular as "a pair of breeches," frequently appears upon the scene. This term is applied to a disappearance of both white balls in either top pocket as the consequence of a longish losing hazard from "hand." In trying to keep the object-white ball on the table when playing such strokes, one has frequently to make the stroke very much more difficult than

the regulation "half-ball" natural angle one. Playing a series of losing hazards from the white ball is all too risky, not to mention its unprofitableness, which I pointed out earlier in the lesson. The red, on the contrary, is the ideal losing hazard scoring ball. It is preferable in every way, both from the greater number of points it yields, and the fact that a descent into a pocket does not necessitate its absence from the table, as in the case of the white ball. Tampering with the object-white ball more than one is absolutely compelled to do is always dangerous.

Speaking of the object-white ball's office in the course of a losing-hazard break, I have said that it simply was to guarantee the release of its partner (the red) from any entanglement or awkward position it might take as the result of a badly judged stroke. Naturally, the game must have been opened up to permit of the losing-hazard play on the lines I have already shown. Your red and object-white balls are both in an equally favourable position, each lying well-placed for a centre-pocket hazard. You make the red your scoring ball for the reasons I have stated, and you keep on with the red just as long as a possible or probable losing hazard shows itself to you. When, however, the coloured ball takes up a position that precludes any hope of a losing hazard from it, then does your object-white perform its accepted functions. You bring it into use, not with any particular idea as to the score you may make with the stroke, but with the view of sending it into such position as shall give you a chance of bringing the red into play again. I stipulate that the object-white ball must necessarily be so placed that an easy score from it

is at the player's hand when he has made some mistake in his manipulation of the red ball.

The white ball must be brought into play if unfavourably placed. It is the player's aim to get *both* object-balls into the field of operations for losing hazards, preferably, of course, middle-pocket ones. You must make a cannon from, or on to, the red ball to remove it from its unfavourable position if losing-hazard play is what you aim at. Naturally, if the object-white ball has been lying in some remote part of the table during your losing-hazard operations from the red, it cannot be of the same service to you as though it presented a certain score. But, all the same, it is your fall-back, and practically your only one.

I will now give some instances of the kind of thing of which I speak, the bringing of the object-white into play to assist the red from any difficulty that may have arisen. On Fig. 33 a bad stroke has been made at a red losing hazard, leaving the object-ball above the middle pocket, quite out of the field of desirable play. This being so, you endeavour to rectify your error by the agency of the object-white ball. You play a gentle middle-pocket losing hazard, driving the white up to the head of the table to leave an angle cannon, always with the intent of removing the red from its awkward resting-place. Your object is the leaving of a cannon which will tend to displace the red ball into a more favourable position. No other stroke than this long angle cannon will suffice to help you out of this and like difficulties. Your sending of the white ball to the top cushion (which even the most moderate cueist will find within his powers after a few attempts at gauging the required

strength) for the formation of an easy straight-away

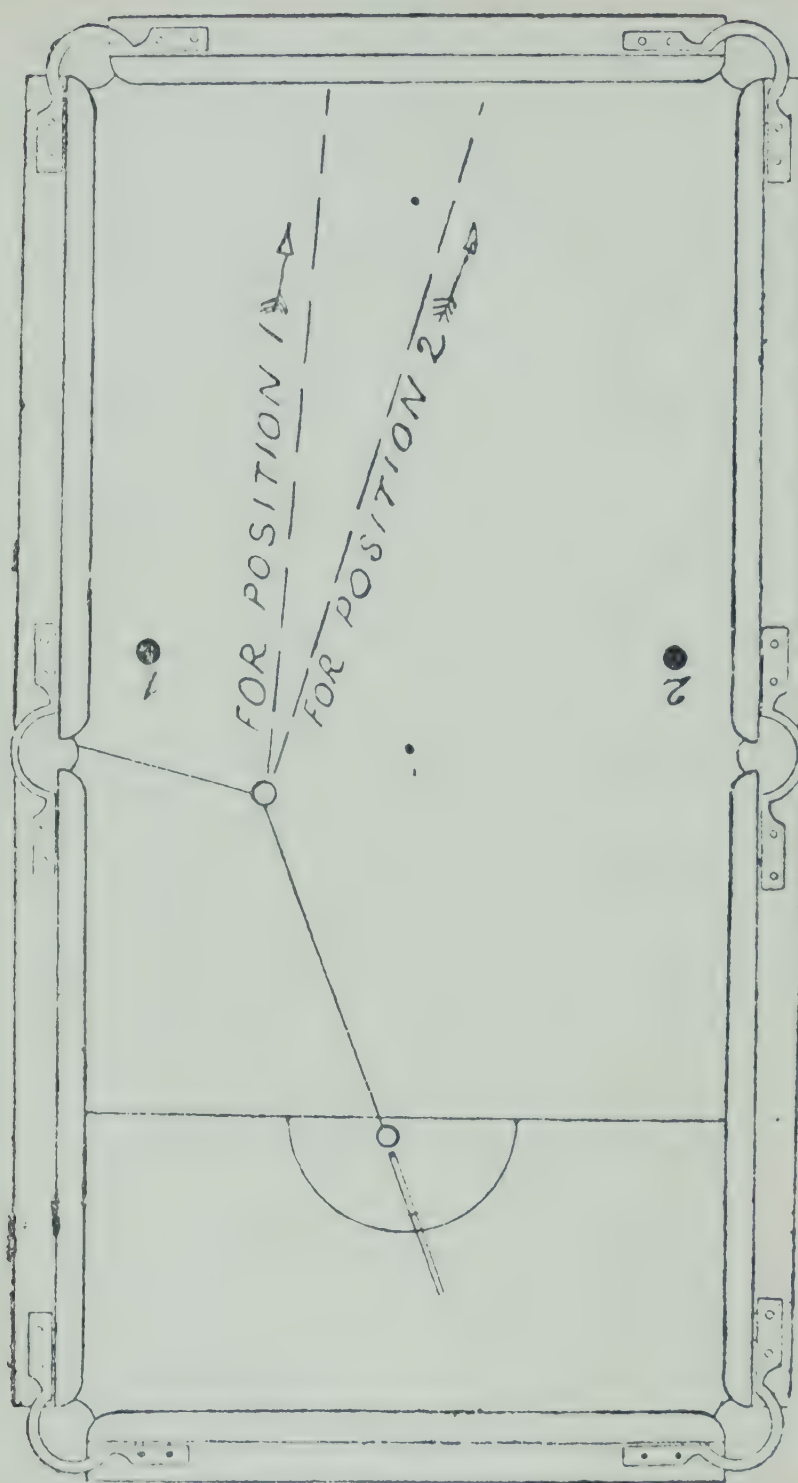


FIG. 33.—Placing the white for the “drop” cannon (two positions) in order to get the red into play again.

angle cannon, as per the figure, should place the three balls near the top cushion for either a cannon or

hazard. But never forget to keep in your mind the very solid fact that you are not to remain at the top of the table. At your first opportunity, if this does not come with your opening stroke, get away from there by making a losing hazard, seeing, of course, that you dispose of the object-ball so that a "drop" (or angle cannon such as the second position on Fig. 33) cannon or losing hazard openings are given to you to resume upon. The angles of the table always permit of such a contingency. Whether it be a winning or losing hazard of which you make use, your object-ball will put you in the way of an easy stroke (cannon or losing hazard) to follow on with. A losing hazard will get you where you desire to be—"in hand"—at the first time of asking, but if no such stroke presents itself there are others following the red winning hazard. In due course these will be shown, as, for the time being, I am endeavouring to explain the principle of the whole thing, a task which no other writer on billiards has ever attempted in detail.

The principle dealing with the loss of position of the red ball when both object-balls are in front of you, when playing from the D, amounts in substance and in fact to the subservience of the object-white to the needs of your scoring ball (the red). Whatever good position it may stand in must be sacrificed to influence your again resuming or obtaining mastery over the red. In a measure it is a paradoxical sacrifice, for in some ways it does, and in others it does not, answer this description. There is no need that you shall so dispose of the white ball that it cannot be available for anything else but a plain cannon to or upon your scoring ball (the red) to move the latter from its undesirable situation. For

the most part, if you keep its movements within the curved lines I drew to illustrate the range of the object-

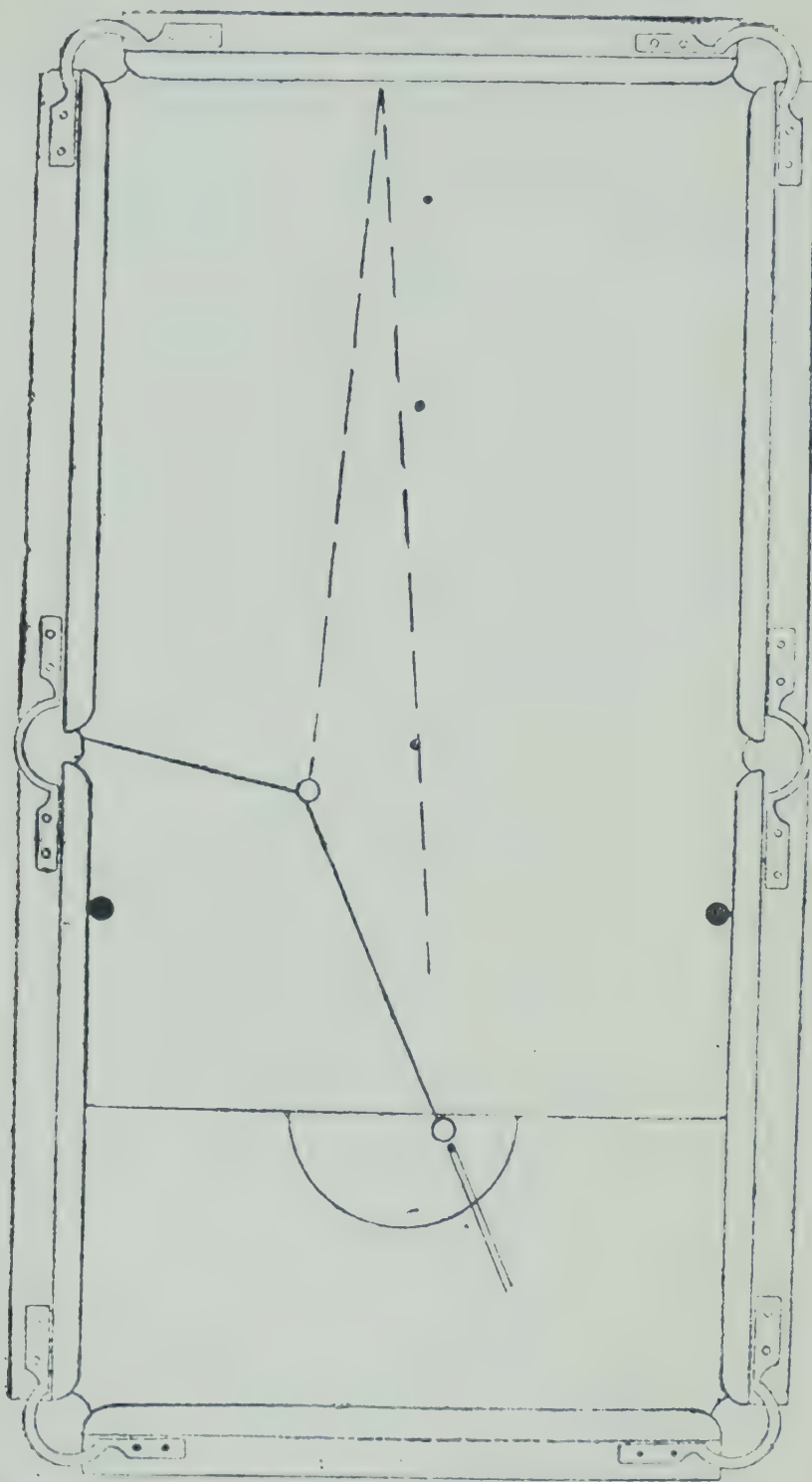


FIG. 34.—Bringing the white back in support of the cushioned red.

ball's stopping-places in losing play from the D, it will do all you require in the matter of regaining supremacy

for the red ball. At the same time, if it err in this

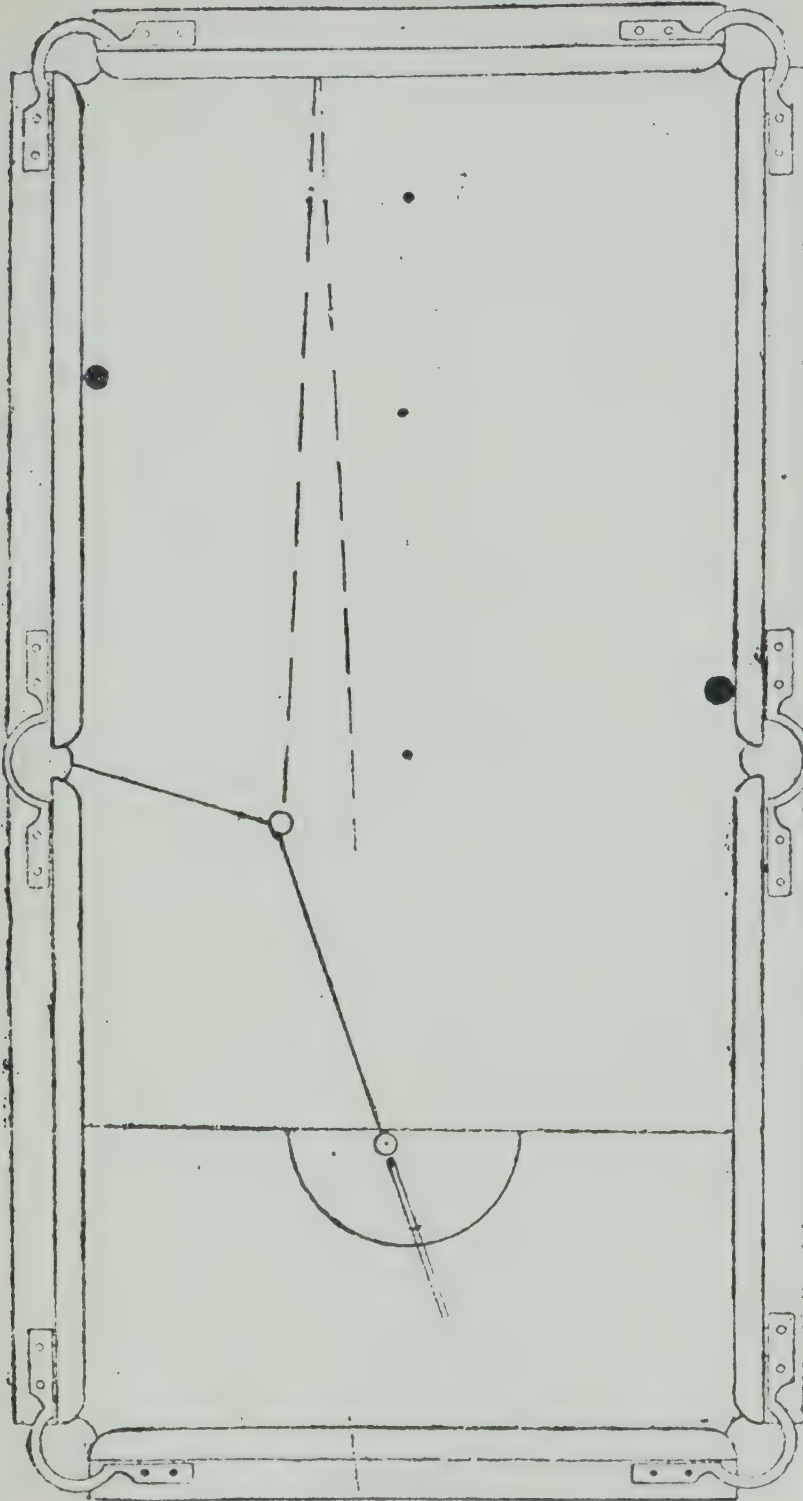


FIG. 35.—Again bringing the white back to get placed for a cannon on to the red.

momentarily, you will still have the object-white well placed for some losing hazard or another. Thus, as I

before said, unless you make two bad scoring strokes (and how possible badly played scoring strokes are needs no telling) in succession, you may still hope for a continuance of your break.

On Figs. 34 and 35 are also shown examples of how the object-white ball comes to the aid of the red ball when the latter has lost position. The stroke that will cover most lost positions is the one which brings the object-white in a central line up the table in graduating degrees, always provided that the pyramid spot is recognized as the limit of its standpoint down the table. Keep it as much as you can centrally on the table, in the same way as you would do the red if this happened to be the ball you were operating upon. Fine instances of the good policy of these tactics are provided on the diagrams numbered 34 and 35. In both cases the red is an unplayable ball, being up against a cushion, and you can do nothing tangible with it. To bring the object-white ball up beside it is to take a risk; a cover may happen, or you may lose it in a middle pocket. The strength of your stroke cannot be gauged to the extent of six inches when the object-ball has such a long distance to travel. Therefore, keep your object-ball in the middle of the table. If you have no cannon, you at least have a chance of such a contingency by the medium of another losing hazard, which the central position of the ball you are playing upon grants you. But on Figs. 36 and 37 the red ball will be seen in a position altogether different from those that the other illustrations show. Here either red ball may be said to be standing in a fairly commanding position at the lower end of the table, No. 1, of course, more so than

No. 2, with No. 3 by far the least well placed of the trio.

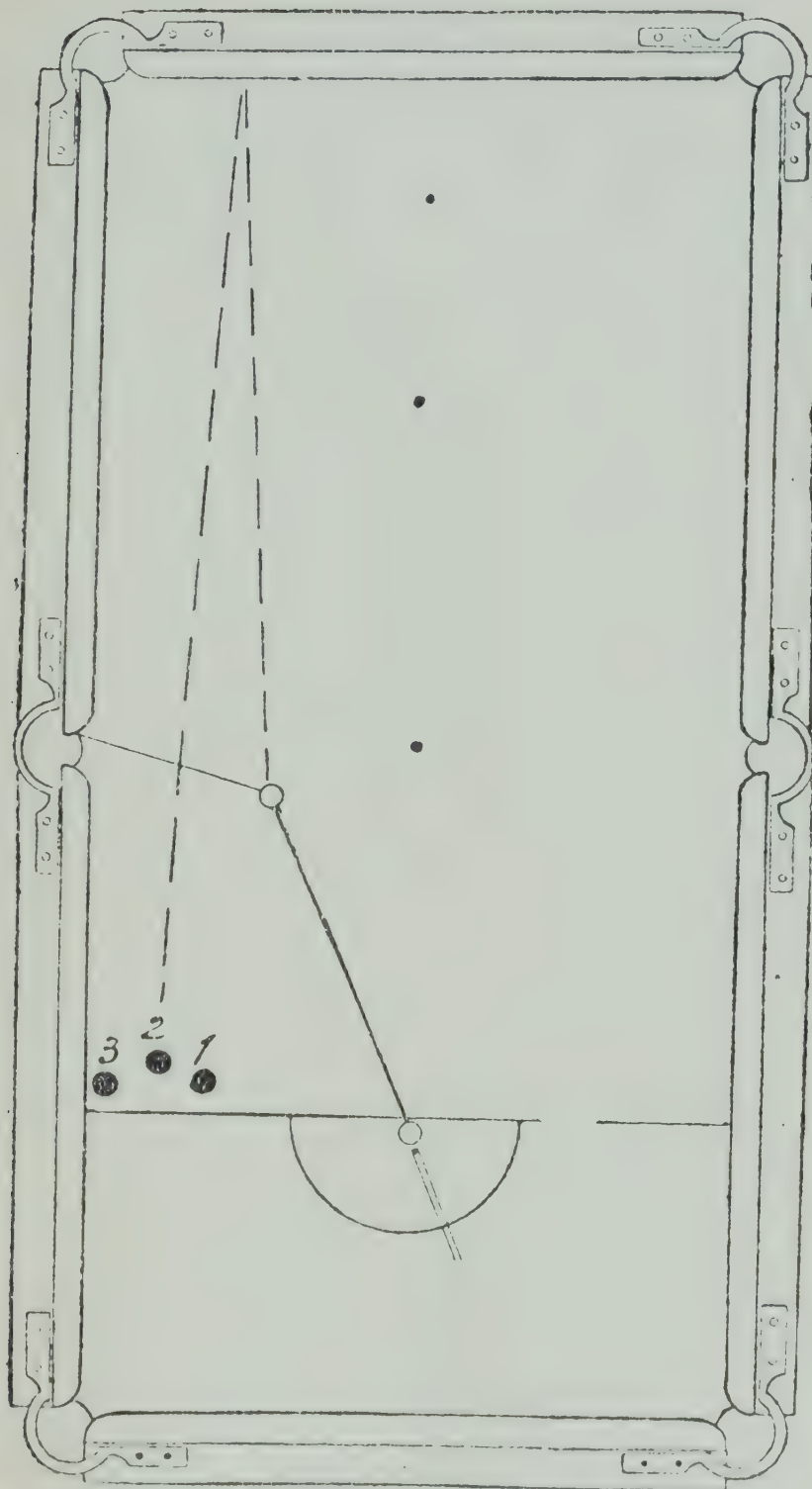


FIG. 36.—Bringing the white right down by the side of the red.

At any and all of such positions the correct game is to bring the object-white as closely as you can to the

VOL. II.

red ball to effect the latter's relief from bondage. Positions 1 and 2 may be treated with comparative

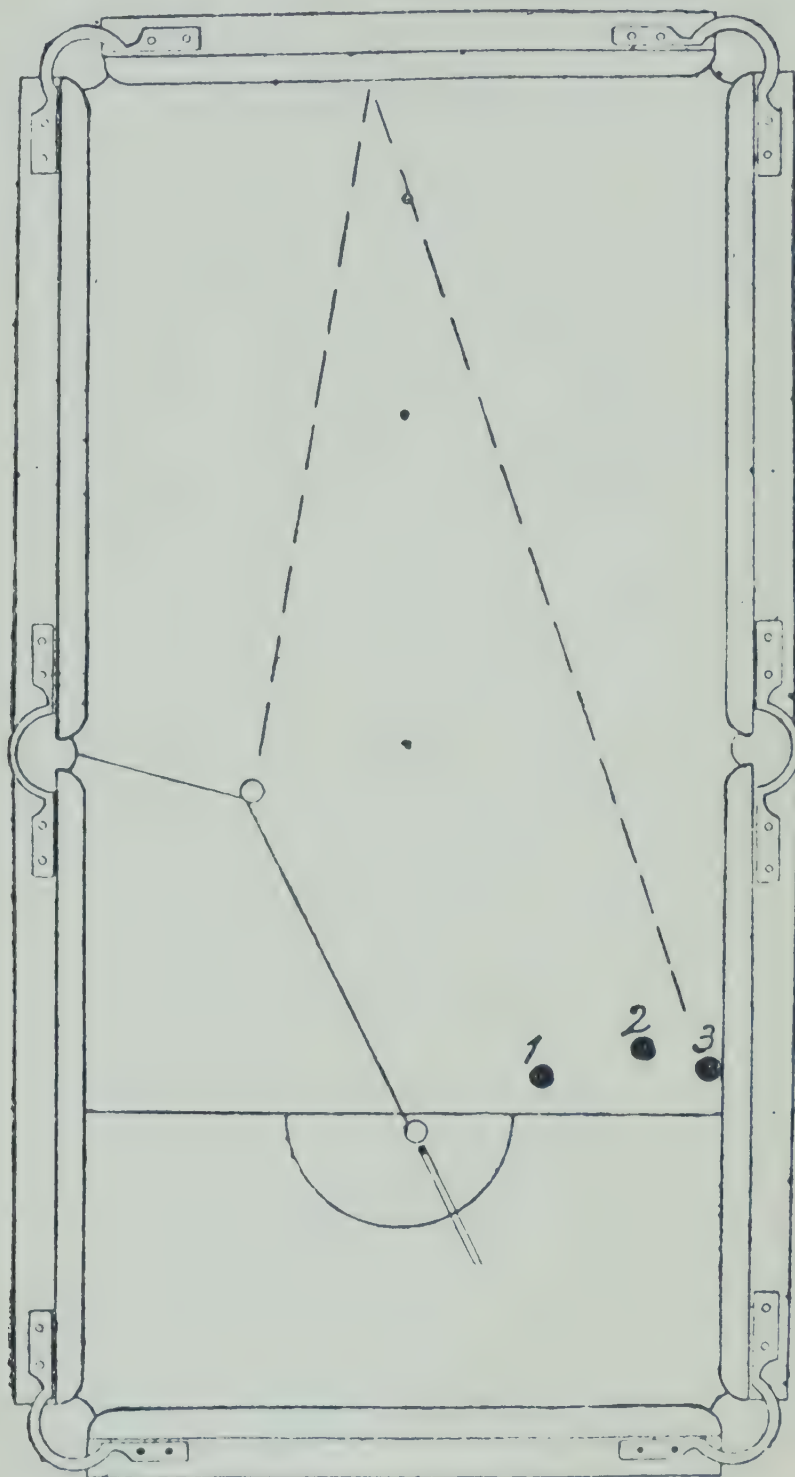


FIG. 37.—Again bringing the white down to the support of the red.

impunity, for even if the object-white does go behind the baulk-line, it should not be a difficult matter to

cannon upon it. But greater care must be exercised with position 3. Here a matter of inches on the wrong side will tell an unpleasant tale. All, however, though by no means in their entirety, will go to show the principle upon which the regaining of position is enacted. As the subject widens out, more lucid examples of what is required from the player will be shown. But at present this outline must suffice. Having given a first principle to losing-hazard work, I now feel it incumbent upon me to give a second. That is: *The working up by practice on the table (thinking out the thing in your mind is good, but not half so efficacious as giving vent to it on the table) your losing-hazard play with the red ball as your sole objective, and not until this fails to turn to the white. Then try and leave all three balls close together after position for losing hazards has been lost.* This nine times out of ten is accomplished by the making of long "drop" or angle cannons, on the lines of Fig. 33. For it is the easiest possible long-range cannon one can play, the balls being practically an equal distance apart—an advantage one can appreciate when he has had a lengthy experience of billiards.

These cannons are the sure foundation of a good "leave" if only but moderately well played, the angles of the table guaranteeing that this shall be so, providing that the balls run undisturbed to their respective defined stopping-places. Played with moderate strength, they can be depended upon to leave all three balls together in the vicinity where the consummation of the cannon (the striking of the second object-ball) has been effected. *Always keep the object-balls wide apart when you leave yourself a cannon from the D—that is, when the first*

object-ball is any distance from it. Close up to it is another matter. But the first-class player abstains as much as possible from leaving himself a long-range cannon with the object-balls close together. It is a matter of extreme difficulty under such circumstances to control their movements. At short range nothing is more desirable than that the object-balls should be close together for a subsequent scoring "leave," and nothing worse when none but cannon play is your prospect that one object-ball is close to you and the other a long distance off. The difficulties of the latter position are more often than not insuperable. The best position for cannon play, and one that will bring good after-positions with it, is that in which the first object-ball is well removed from the playing-ball, with the second object-ball equally afar off.

The subject of the regaining of position after it has been lost for losing hazards is one of the most enchanting features of billiards. It is multitudinous in the array of strokes that it presents, for they are practically unlimited. And no little study is often required to determine which is and which is not the correct procedure. The more latitude, however, that you can give yourself, to allow for mistakes in the destination of the object-ball you are playing upon, the more will you be in keeping with the true principles of such play. It is always the cannon that enables you to remove a badly placed object-ball from its unfavourable location. This may not come with the first or second stroke, but all the while you must bear in mind that you are playing up to the cannon. The angle cannon from the D which will leave all the balls together close to the top cushion is your ideal.

Imagine that some three or four losing hazards have been made. Then the red ball takes up the position

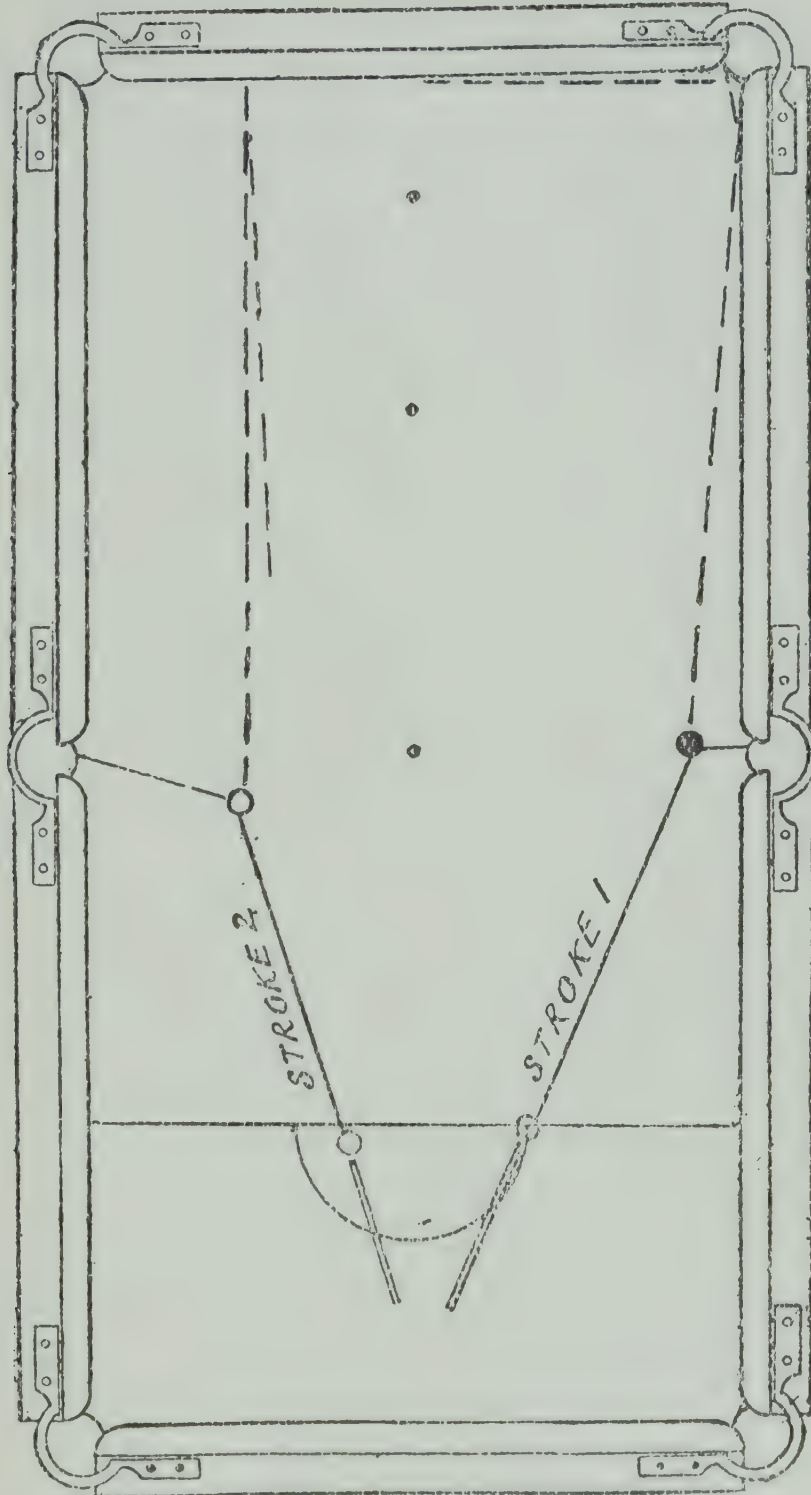


FIG. 38.—Stroke 1 places the red out of play along the top cushion ; stroke 2 shapes the white up for the " drop " cannon.

shown on Fig. 38, over a middle pocket, as the consequence

of a top-pocket losing hazard. He now endeavours to go into the middle pocket, driving the red on to the side cushion, thence to the top to return to go into the centre of the table. But he does not make contact with the red ball as he intended, and the latter, being driven into the jaws of the top pocket, is shouldered nearly midway along the top cushion, completely out of play. Naturally, he looks to his reserve force, the object-white ball, to permit of his again getting it under control. And he may do so by the agency of a cannon following the loser from the white ball, as the illustration denotes.

On Fig. 39 is a stroke which shows another movement, but one that brings about the same result as the previous stroke—the taking of all three balls to the head of the table. Here the red ball is a long way up the table. Cutting the white in its direction would not be certain either to leave the balls together or for the drop cannon. But a plain losing hazard from the white, which causes it to return to the middle of the table, will open up the situation. And a subsequent cannon from the white to the red should drive the latter ball over the right top pocket and the former somewhere in the vicinity of the billiard-spot. Thus the leaving of the three balls together—one of the rules when losing hazard position is broken up—occurs.

There is a point in the matter of judging from which ball you should make your “drop” or angle cannon which will be found of service. Unless you take the guiding-line that I will show you, it is not easy to determine the best course of action. The whole thing, however, lies in a nutshell. You make

an imaginary midway mark across the upper half of the table. If an object-ball has got out of the central

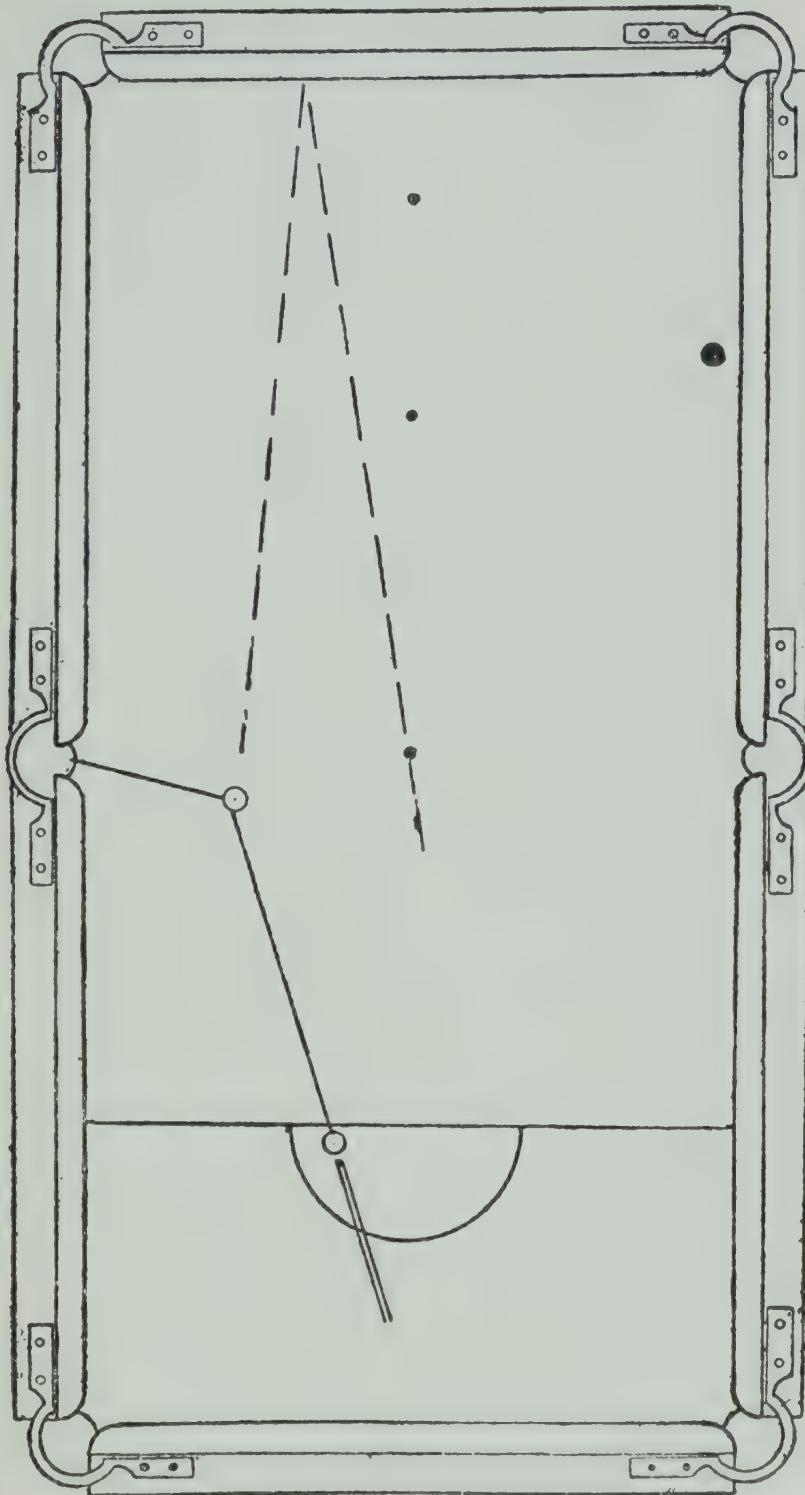


FIG. 39.—Bringing the white back to leave an open cannon with the idea of driving the red over the right top pocket, and place the white near the billiard-spot.

line of fire, and locates itself *anywhere between a middle*

pocket and the imaginary midway mark, then you know there is a drop cannon from it. That is, of course,

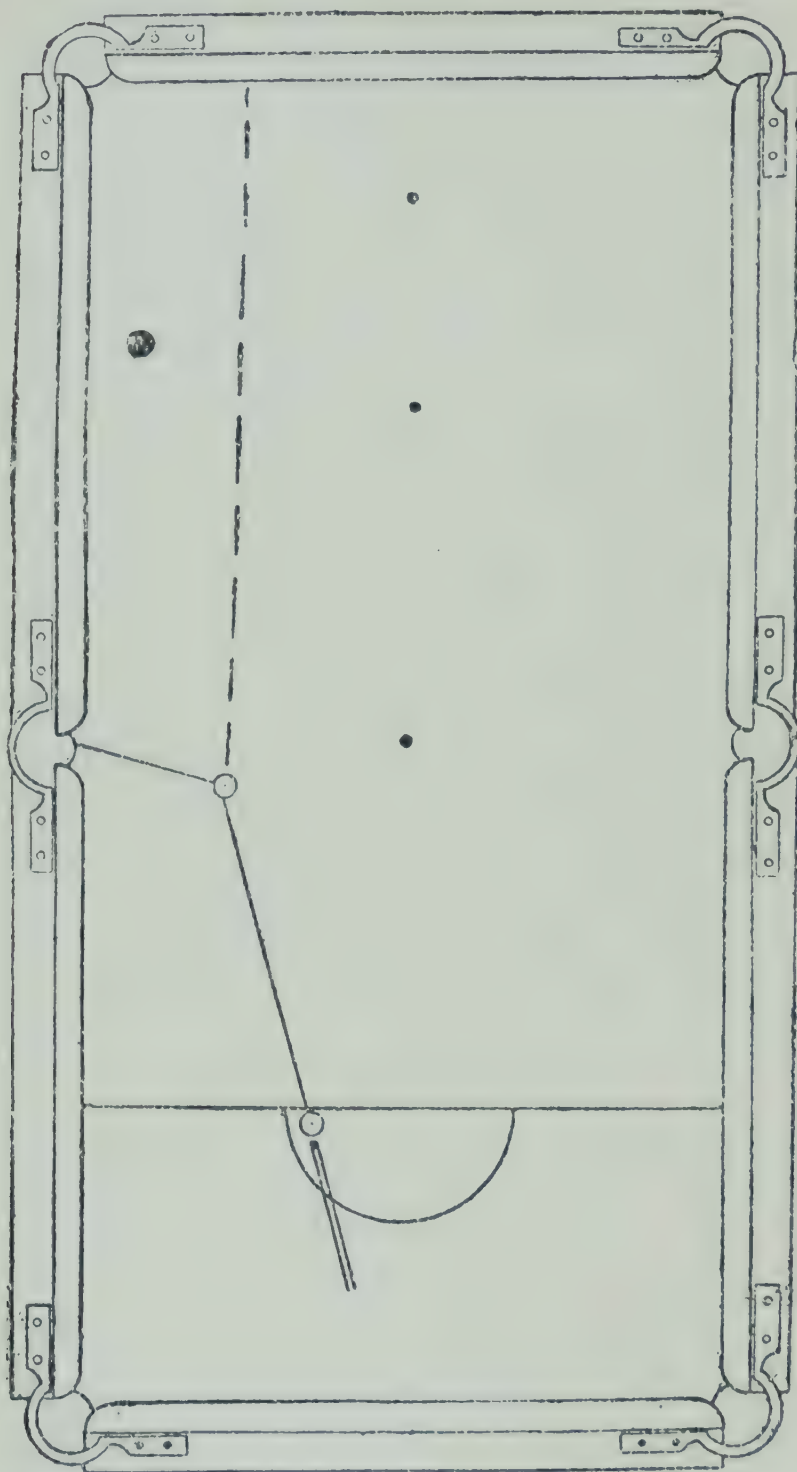


FIG. 40.—Sending the white up by the top cushion for the “drop” cannon.

unless it is touching or is very close to a cushion, for then it will be an unplayable ball, and the other

object-ball will have to be brought to a point below it to remove it from its undesirable location.

Should, however, an object-ball be anywhere (again I stipulate out of the range of losing-hazard play) *between the top cushion and the imaginary midway line* across the upper half of the table, then it will almost invariably be the medium of a cannon *to* it, and not from it. Fig. 39 provides an example of this class of stroke.

The rules which govern this kind of play have, like others, their exceptions. Fig. 40 illustrates one of these. On it the red ball will be seen above the midway line of the upper half of the table. Ordinarily this would mean that it could not be made the first object-ball for the cannon which is to regain your lost position. But the object-white ball is more easy of manipulation if driven gently to the top cushion in a straight line (as per figure) by a three-quarter-ball impact than by a less full striking of it. Therefore this position affords one exception from the standing rule. Another is seen on Fig. 41.

The stroke that ensues from the white losing hazard may shortly be termed a cannon to leave both balls in position for middle-pocket losing-hazard work. As the balls are first of all placed, the red is practically out of play. Strokes for the top-pocket losing hazards, when the object-ball is below the centre spot, as the red now is, are exceedingly difficult to make. The position on Fig. 41 makes the angle to the right middle pocket a very wide one, and equally as awkward of execution as the upper pockets. This being so, you again have recourse to the white ball. Your object now is to bring

it back between the red ball and the baulk-line, to get the red ball out of trouble. Keep your white within

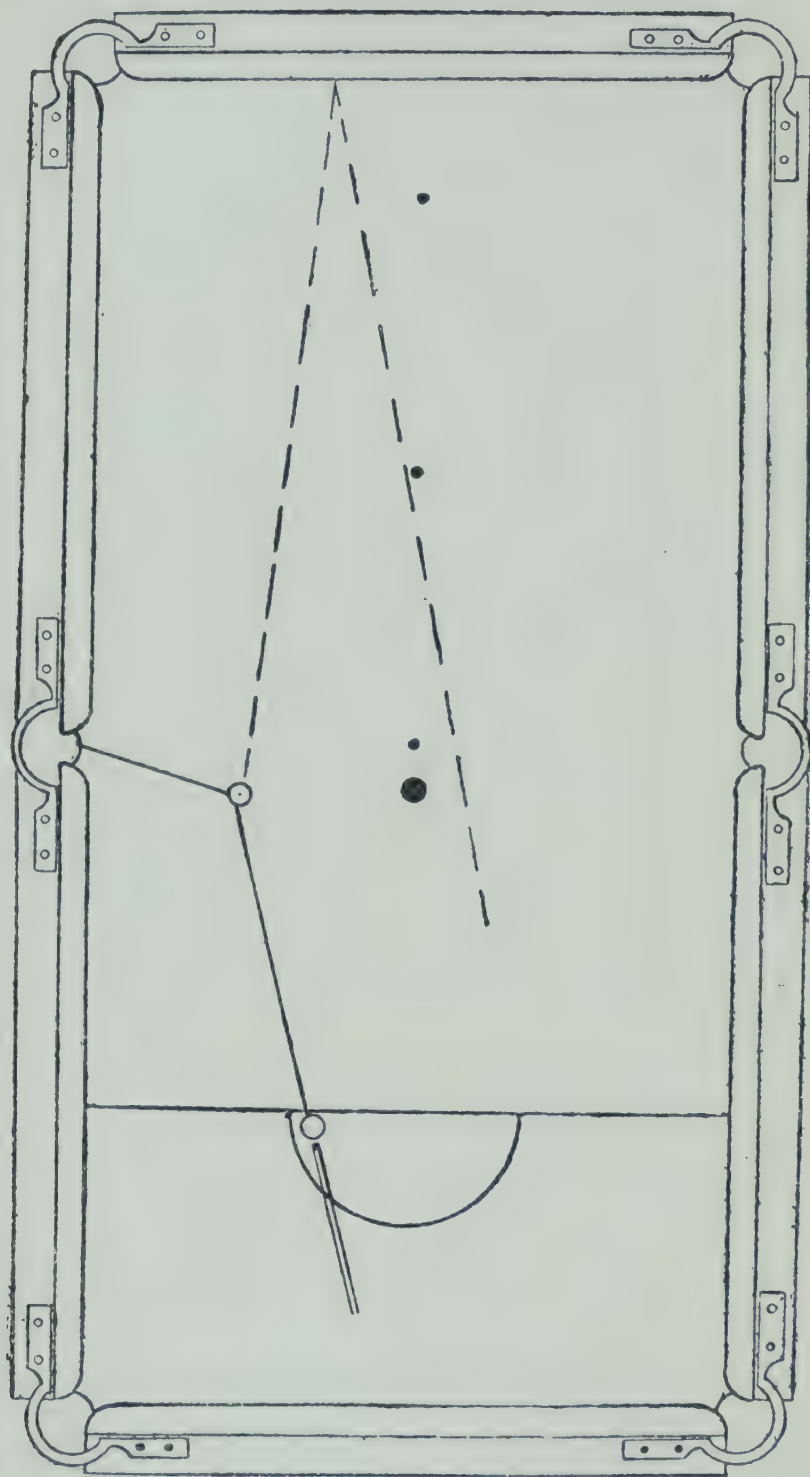


FIG. 41. —Bringing the white down to gain position for a cannon on the red.

the prescribed limits that I have laid down for an

object-ball in losing-hazard play. Try to bring it in close proximity to the red ball. Unless you are unlucky

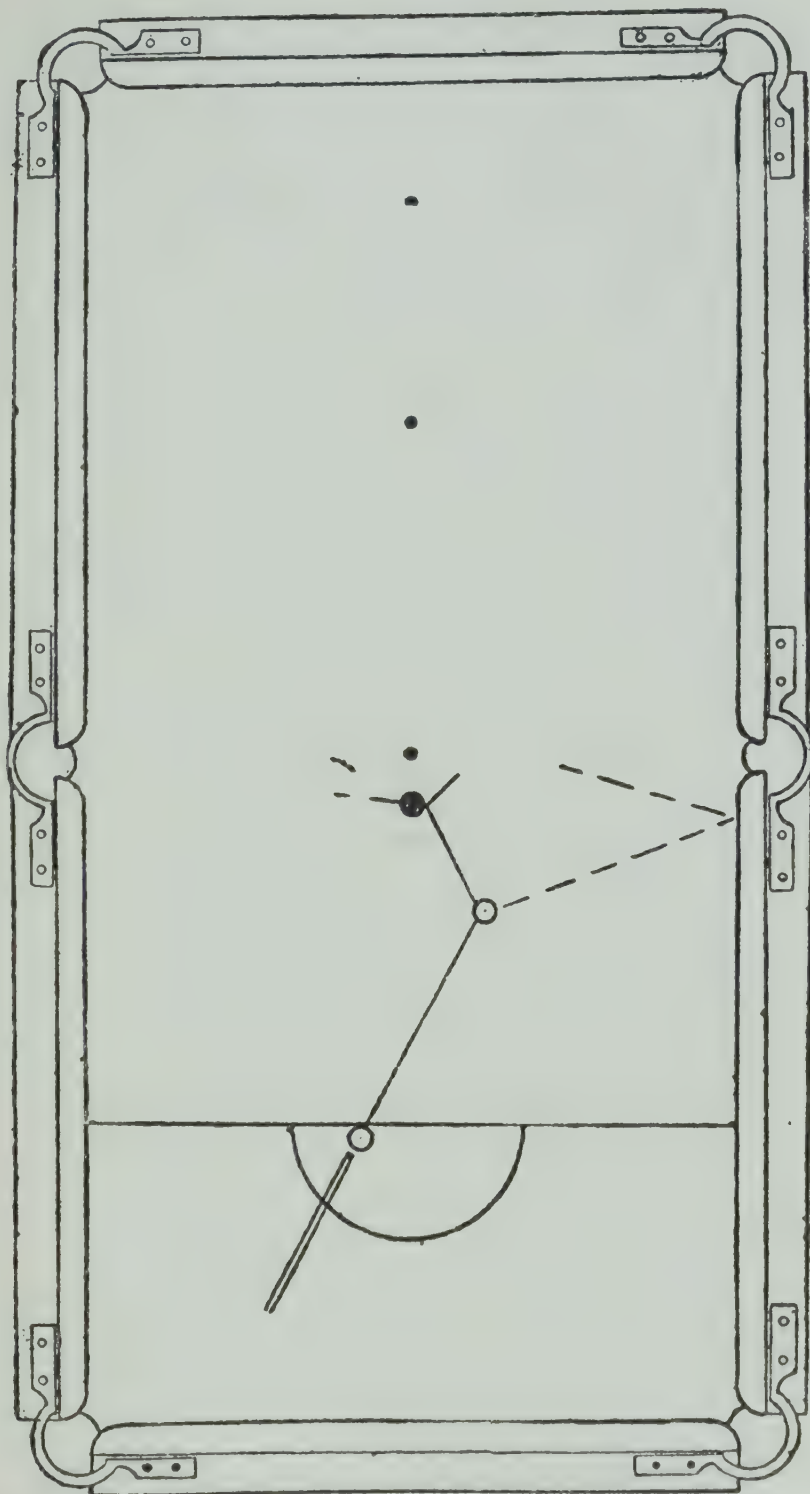


FIG. 42.—A gentle cannon from the D trying to get the losing-hazard positions for both object-balls.

enough to get a "cover," an easy cannon is sure to be

left for you. And then a gentle stroke, as on Fig. 42, should place you with the opportunity of scoring a losing hazard in one or the other of the middle pockets. As often as not a judicious playing of the cannon will leave you both object-balls placed for middle-pocket losing hazards when next you operate from the D. This management of the balls shows how much more telling and certain are two easy strokes than one difficult one, no matter how well the latter *may* leave you. Never be in too great a hurry to get placed for your cannon from the D. It may take you two, three, or perhaps four strokes to do so, but do not forget that you are scoring all the time. Impatience does not fit in with good billiard-playing.

Another, and, I think, pretty, example of working for the "drop" or angle cannon is given in Fig. 43. It is not exactly a simple question this, as to what direction shall be given to the white ball, obviously the only playable ball. But the game undoubtedly is to bring it into the middle of the table, and then to manipulate a gentle middle-pocket loser, sending it to the top cushion to await the effect of the stereotyped "drop" cannon for position.

One of the prettiest specimens is, I think, shown on Fig. 44. On this I illustrate a rather peculiar placing of the balls. Just look at it, and blink your eyes to the fact that I have designated the movements of the balls. Should you, my readers, have attempted the long white losing hazard into the left top pocket, if such a position had come across your path during the course of a game? And, also, should you, if you had tried this stroke, have driven the object-white between

the red ball and the side cushion, to finally take up

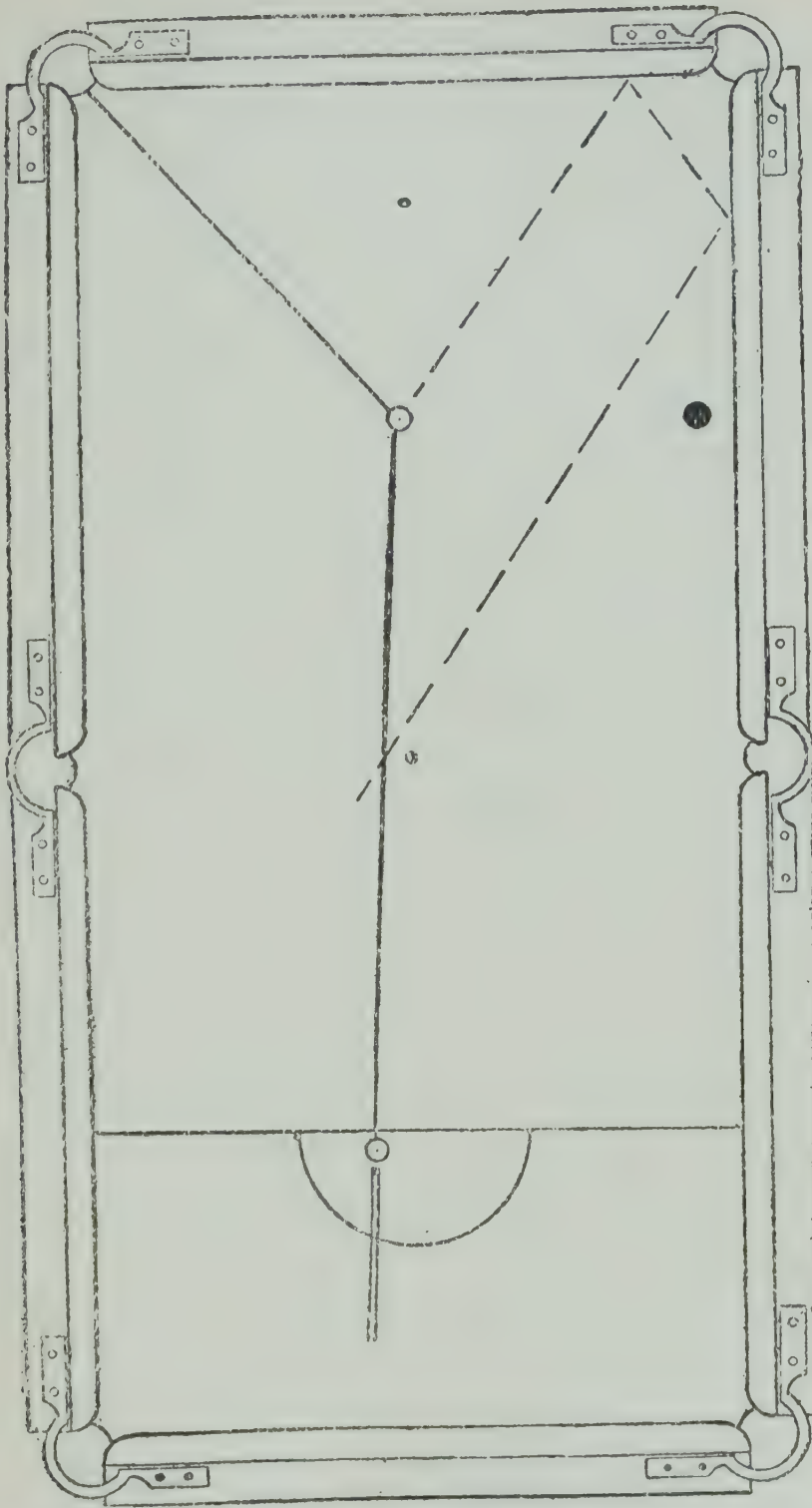


FIG. 43.—A strongish "loser" from the white, keeping it to the middle of the table for either another hazard or, preferably, the cannon.

its resting-place at a point somewhere midway along the top cushion? Whether you would, or whether you

would not, have had such ideas while executing the

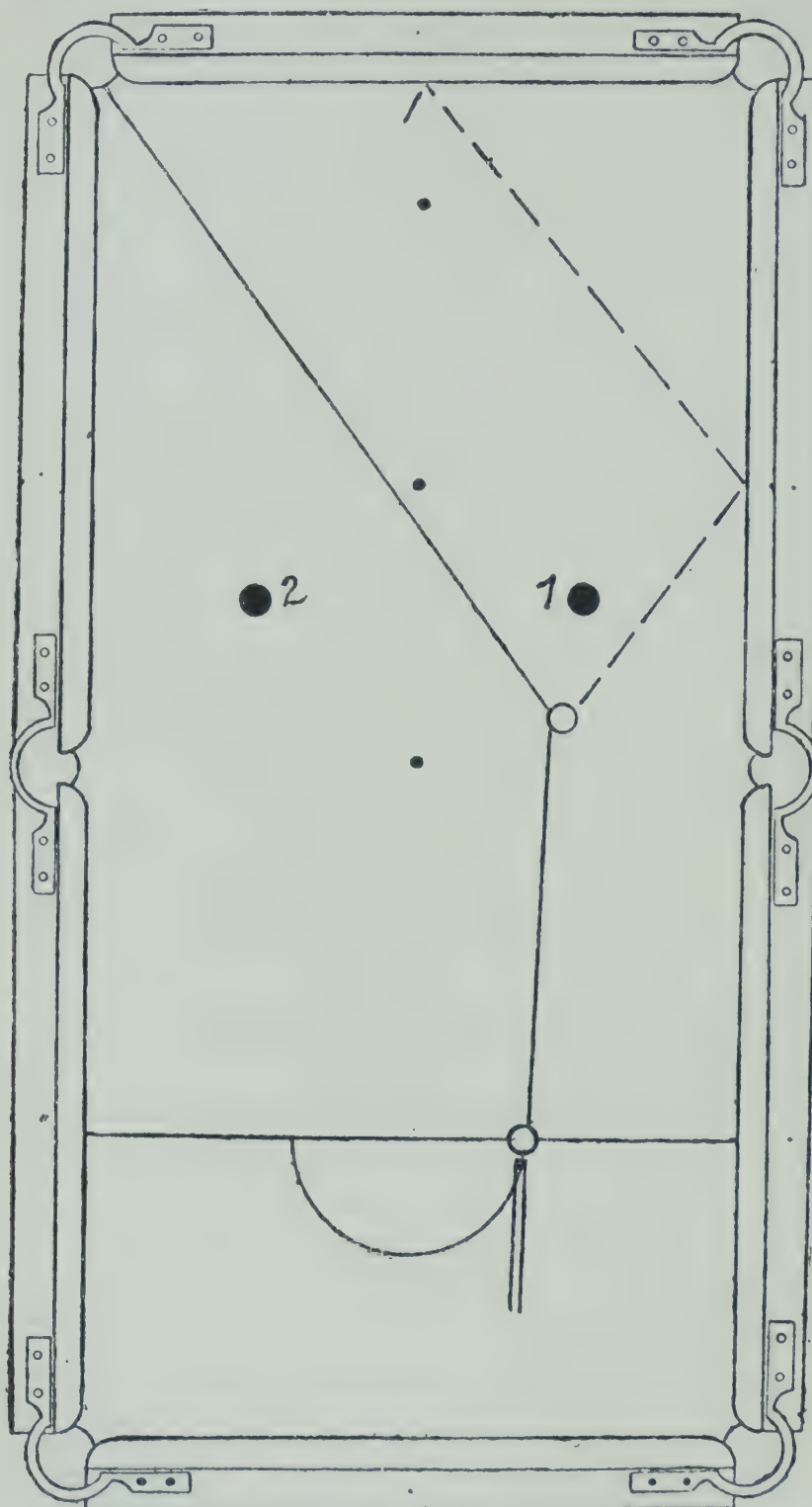


FIG. 44.—Placing the white ball, by means of a top-pocket losing hazard, for the "drop" cannon.

stroke, one thing remains incontrovertible, and that is, that had you acted otherwise you would not have

“played the game.” It is merely a carrying out of the second principle of the losing-hazard break. This, in effect, takes the shape of counselling the player to try and leave all three balls close together by the agency of the “drop” cannon, after position for losing hazards has been broken up. Then, with the balls close to you, you should, by means of a little ingenuity, regain the desired losing-hazard position.

Returning to the position on Fig. 44, I must point out that the long losing hazard it shows from the object-white ball is the only stroke that will fit in with the workings of my second principle (as previously stated). The object-white is the key to either side of the table, to demonstrate which statement I have placed two red balls in parallel positions. From each one of these the object-white, if directed in the manner the dotted lines on the illustration convey, will present the “drop” cannon, with its resultant leaving of the three balls close together.

On Fig. 45 I present another position, which, doubtless, would have exercised the calculating powers of those who only had my “rule-of-thumb” directions to work upon. Most, I take it, would go for the ball-to-ball cannon, which, of course, is a very easy stroke. But the drawbacks of the cannon are manifold, if not exactly manifest. Playing the stroke in this way, you will find it none too simple a proceeding to direct the red ball just where you wish to, over the right top pocket, your palpable objective. Then, too, you run the risk of seeing the object-white go across the table and disappear in the left middle pocket. Such possible contingencies must always be avoided,

unless one is driven by sheer force of circumstances to

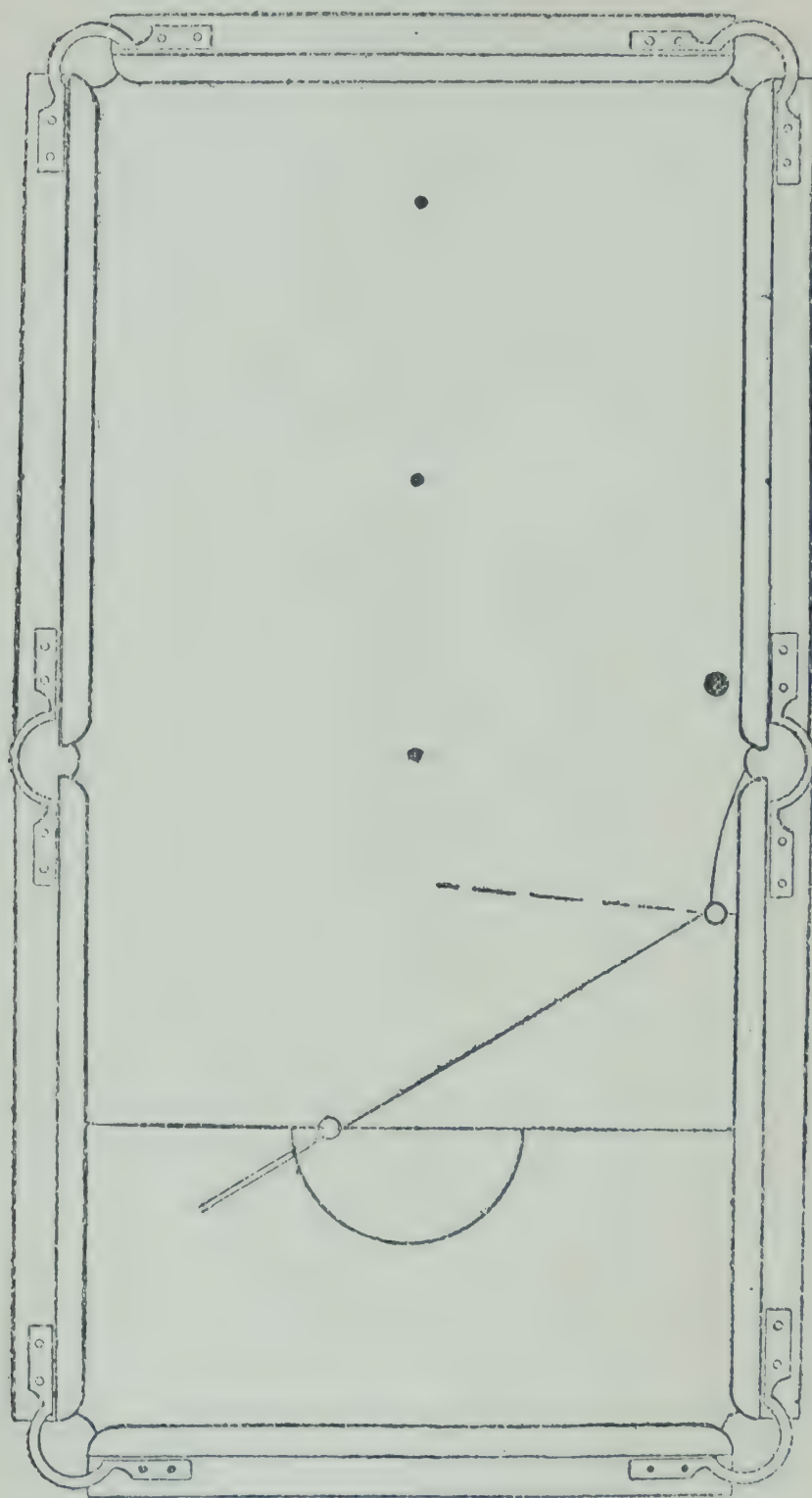


FIG. 45.—A short "jenny" off the white, opening up a good game.

take the chances of them. By playing the "short jenny" in the right middle pocket, the sounder game,

even if a more difficult opening stroke, is seen. It is, moreover, in accordance with the principles of the losing-hazard break. For the object-white, coming out to the central line of the table, permits the making of a "run-through" right middle-pocket losing hazard, which drives it to the head of the table for the regulation "drop" cannon. The "short jenny" is so obviously in the player's favour, that he must try it. The "set" game at billiards is the essence of break making.

I now come to another phase of the recovery of position. You have, we must imagine, played your "drop" cannon (none too well I may add), and have left the balls as on Fig. 46. You look again for your "drop" cannon, for that is the invariable rule when in difficulties. When in doubt at whist, the proverb says "Play trumps." Applied to billiards, when you have a ready score on and are uncertain of your procedure, I suggest "Leave the 'drop' cannon." Fig. 46 shows how by a fine stroke on the ball near the corner pocket you "cut" it down the table to leave the "drop" cannon, or rather a section of it.

Next, on Fig. 47, is a variation of the stroke just dealt with. This shows the losing-hazard angle a very wide one. To drive the ball down the table as before is impossible now. In its stead a doubling across the table to leave the "drop" cannon from the other side is now the plan to be adopted.

Both the instances of position that Figs. 46 and 47 illustrate are sadly mishandled by the average of players. They always seem to leave every variety of stroke but the all-important "drop" cannon. If it is

the object-white ball they are manipulating, too often

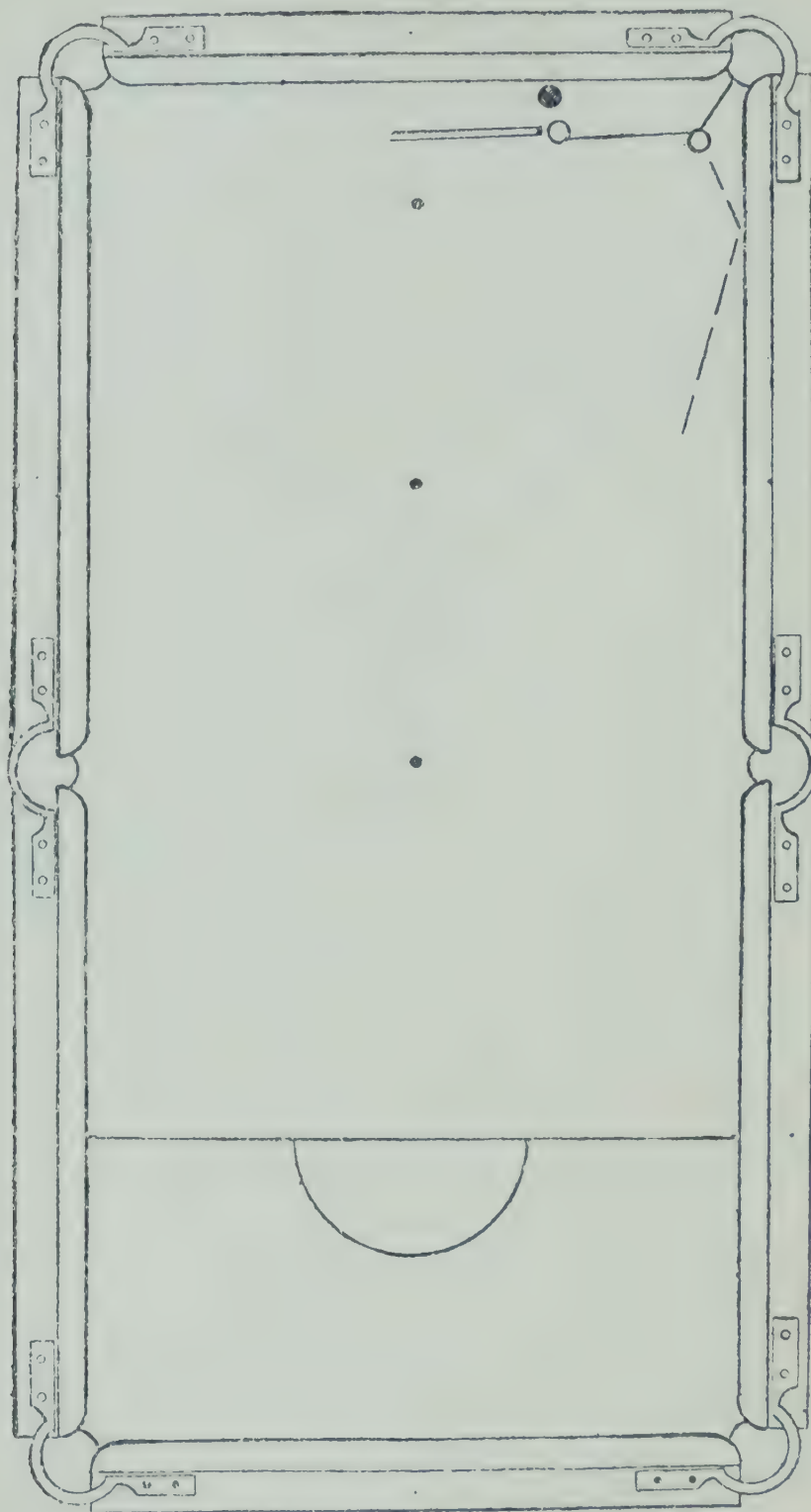


FIG. 46.—Cutting the white down the table to leave a sectional
“drop” cannon.

it is made the medium of succeeding top-pocket losing

hazards, until, as generally happens, its services are lost

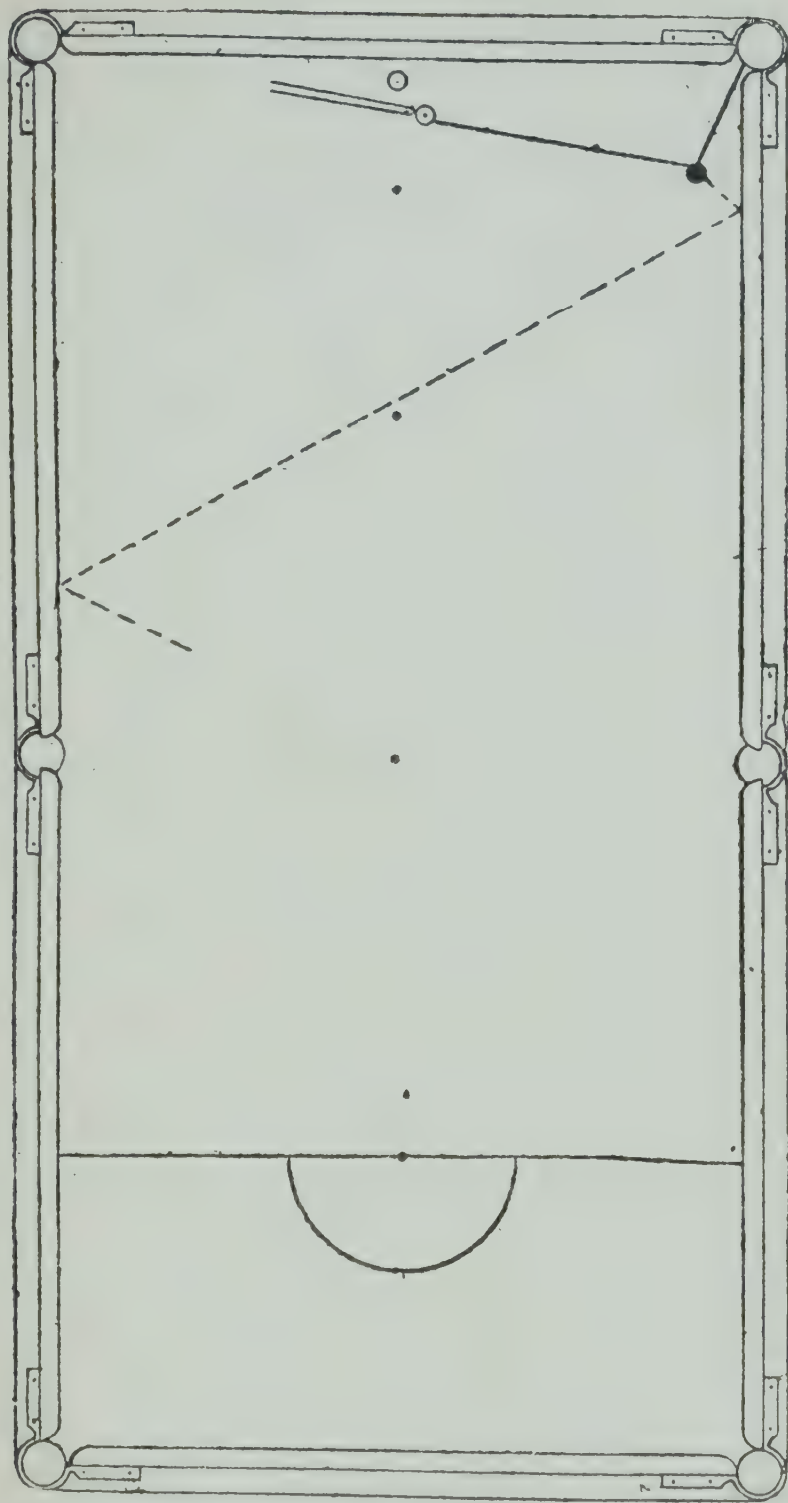


FIG. 47.—Doubling the red obliquely across the table to form up a "drop" cannon.

to the player by reason of its falling into one or other of the gaping receptacles. A study of either of the

positions will tend to show that, as I stipulated for, the balls must be left apart for "drop" cannons, or, in fact, any cannon, if the object-balls are any appreciable distance from the cue-ball. Only when the latter is beside the object-balls is it desirable that they should be in close company. Equal distances, or as nearly as you can get to them, between the three balls is the ideal form of cannon play. The desired angle can be acquired so much more easily.

But to leave a "drop" cannon for the ensuing stroke, when you have the three balls together, taking Figs. 46 and 47 again for examples, you must perforce drive your attacked object-ball, whichever that be, away from the other. You, of course, keep it to the line that will ensure an angle cannon to follow upon when you play from the D, with as wide an opening between the object-balls as you can conveniently make. For the open cannon is the foundation of bringing the balls together.

A valuable rule in connection with the leaving of the balls at the head of the table (that is, when the cue-ball is also in that region), and a losing hazard is made, runs thus: "*When the object-balls are together, make your losing hazard open them out for the 'drop' cannon. But when the cue-ball lies close to an object-ball, and the remaining ball is situated anywhere between the centre of the upper half of the table and the middle pockets, do not remove the ball you attack more than is absolutely necessary.*"

Of the first portion of this rule I have given illustrations, and now I do so in regard to the latter part. For on Fig. 48 I show what is meant by retaining the ball you attack when you are close up with it, and the

remaining object-ball lying well down the table. By a

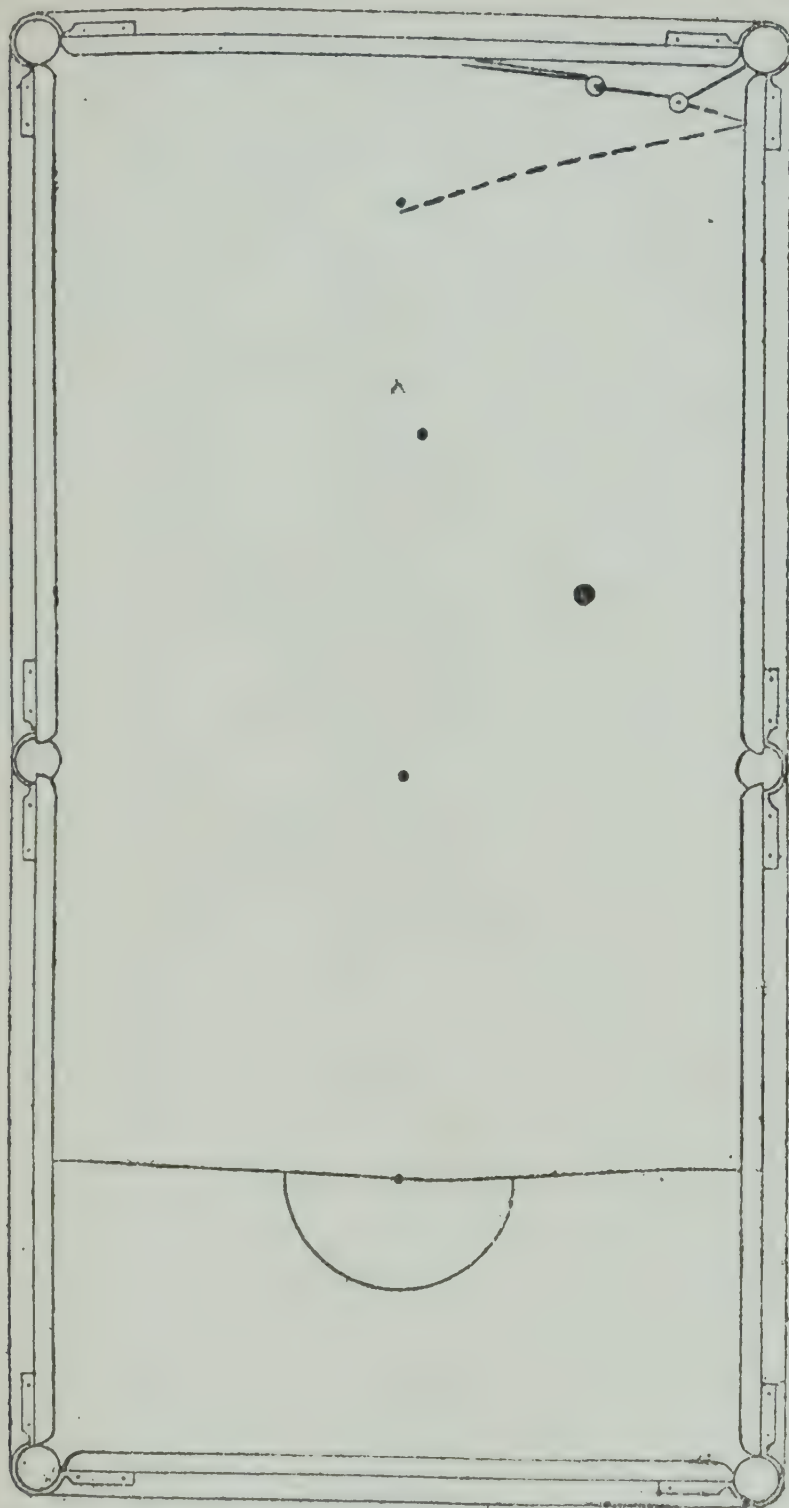


FIG. 48.—Retaining the white by a run-through stroke at the top of the table to shape a “drop” cannon position.

“run-through” losing hazard the object-white is withheld from going close to the red ball. Thus the “drop”

cannon follows upon the lines that I have explained.

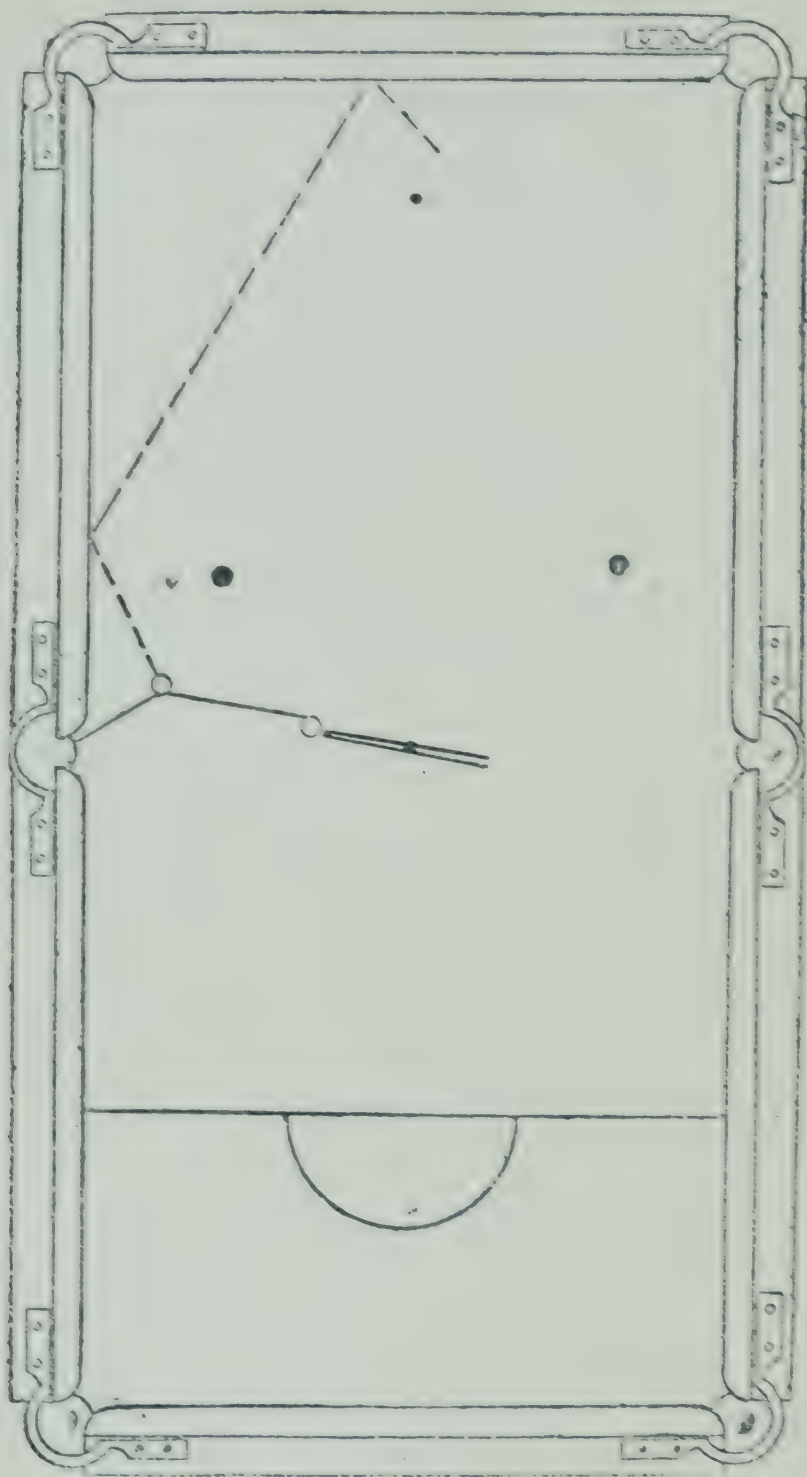


FIG. 49. — Cutting the white *via* the side cushion to the head of the table to form a "drop" cannon.

Briefly, the argument resolves itself into a cutting or driving of the played object-ball down the table when

all three balls are together. When wide apart they must be kept so.

Fig. 49 shows again how an object-ball may be made the key to either side of the table for the "drop" cannon, which is the only stroke you may look for when no possibility exists of a losing hazard. The two red balls near the top side cushions go to demonstrate how the object-white is the key to the "drop" cannon. Driven anywhere to a central position at the head of the table, it ensures the easiest of ball-to-ball strokes. In the instance provided, a sharp cutting of it sends it on to the side cushion, thence to the top cushion. A little left "side" will be found useful to carry the cue-ball into the pocket.

Now, Fig. 50 illustrates a reversal of the preceding stroke. Here the red ball is located by the top cushion. On the principle that you keep the balls apart for your "drop" cannon, you make an entirely different stroke upon the object-white. Instead of a "thin" contact with the latter, you now retain it as nearly to its position as possible by a gentle run-through stroke played with left "side," to counteract any opposition you might otherwise receive from the "shoulder" of the pocket.

Figs. 51 and 52 also provide examples of how the disposal of an object-ball is affected by the location of its partner, and against the old doctrine of keeping the object-balls apart when they are so situated, and dispersing to favourable points the attacked balls when they are near each other. The scoring position on either figure is the same—the losing hazard into the left top pocket. But the one (that of Fig. 51) is a run-through stroke, and the other a "cut." The

first-mentioned takes the played object-ball down the table for the formation of the open cannon, whilst the

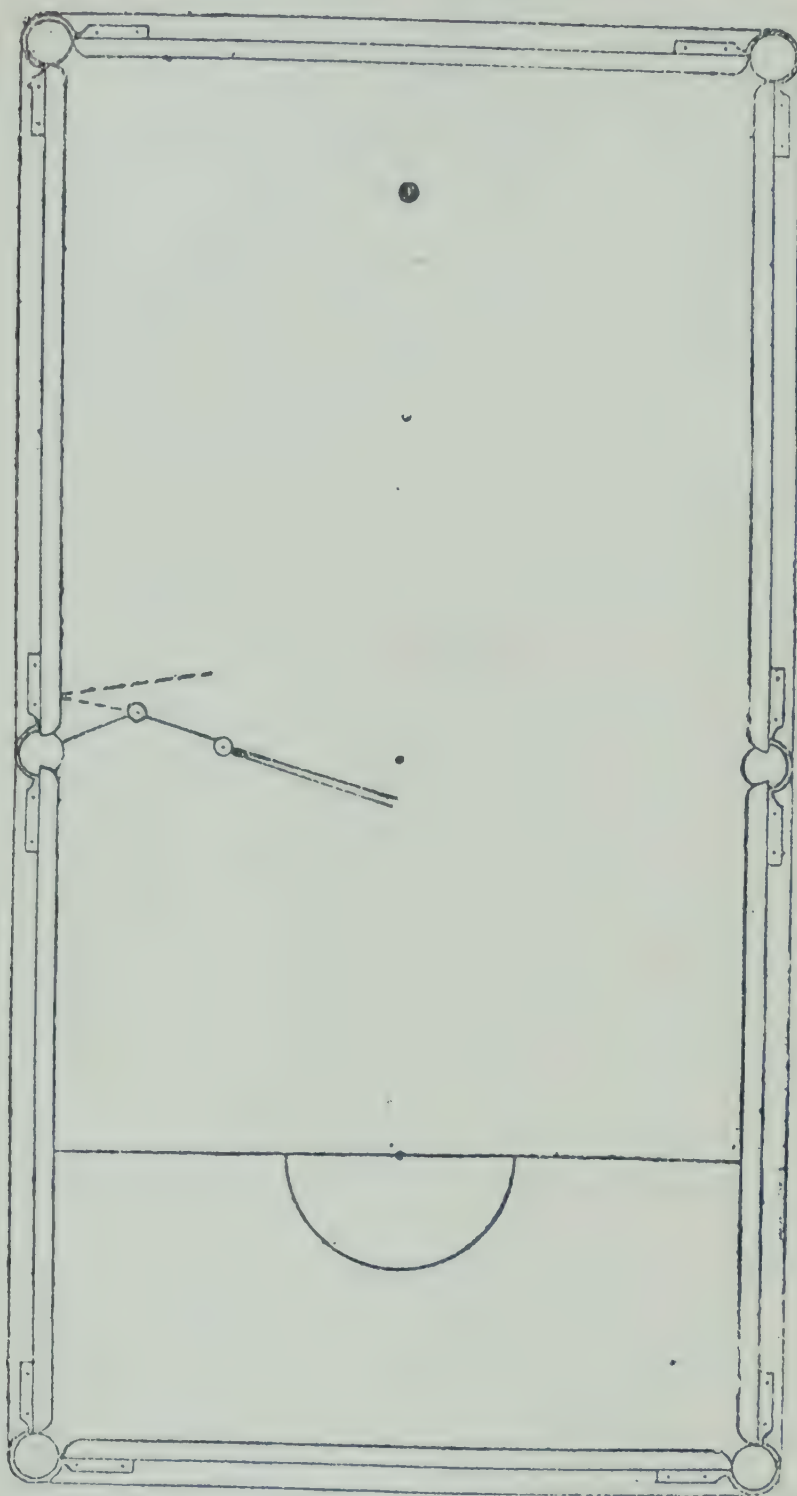


FIG. 50.—Retaining the white with a run-through for the “drop” cannon.

desired position in the second is gained by the fine or “thin” stroke. Both tend towards the same end.

Next, on Figs. 53 and 54, I bring into operation a variety of stroke other than that of the purely plain

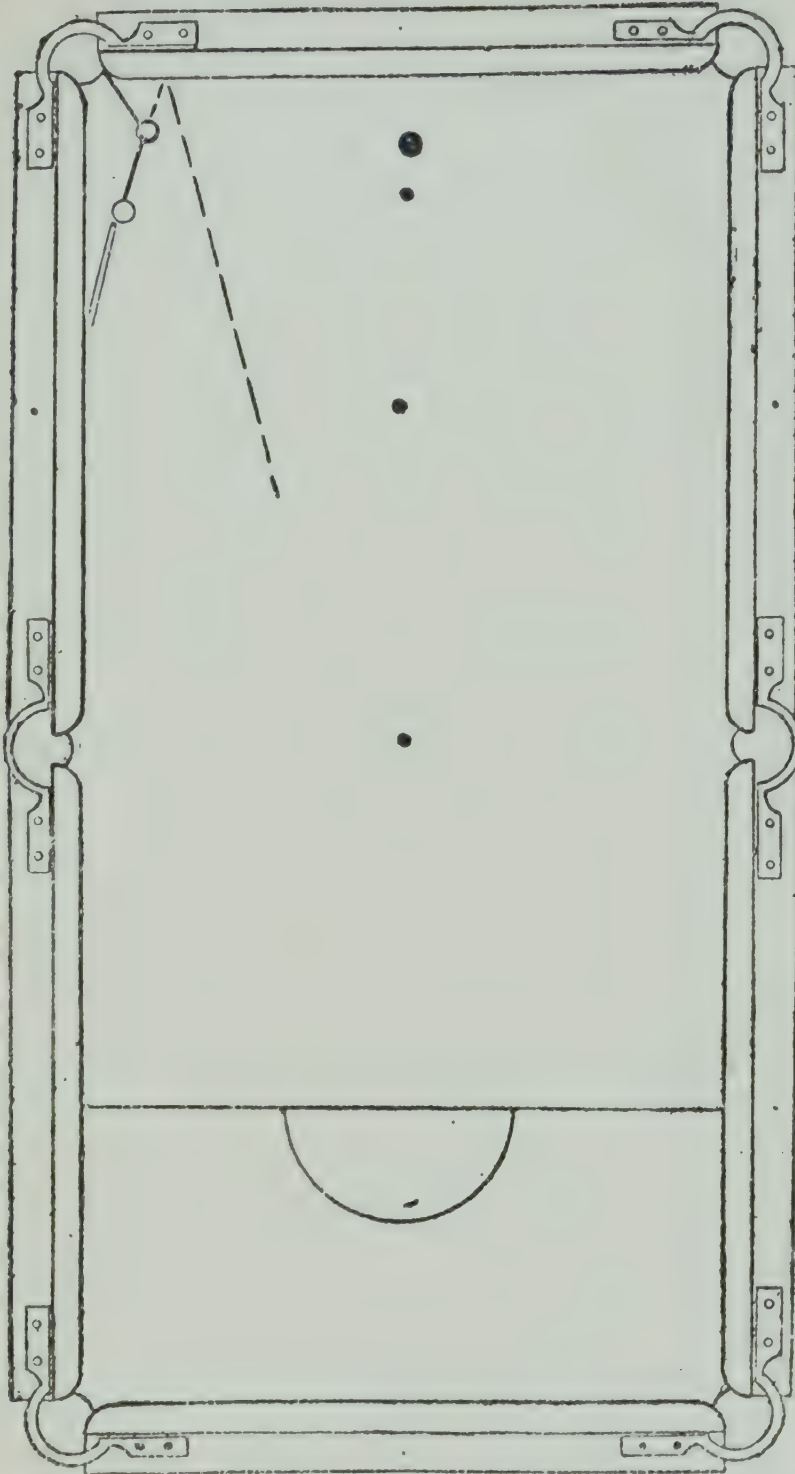


FIG. 51.—Running through the white to send it down the table for the “drop” cannon.

ball or “side” description. It is that of the “screw,” which plays no unimportant part in the matter of

opening out complicated situations. My earlier lessons

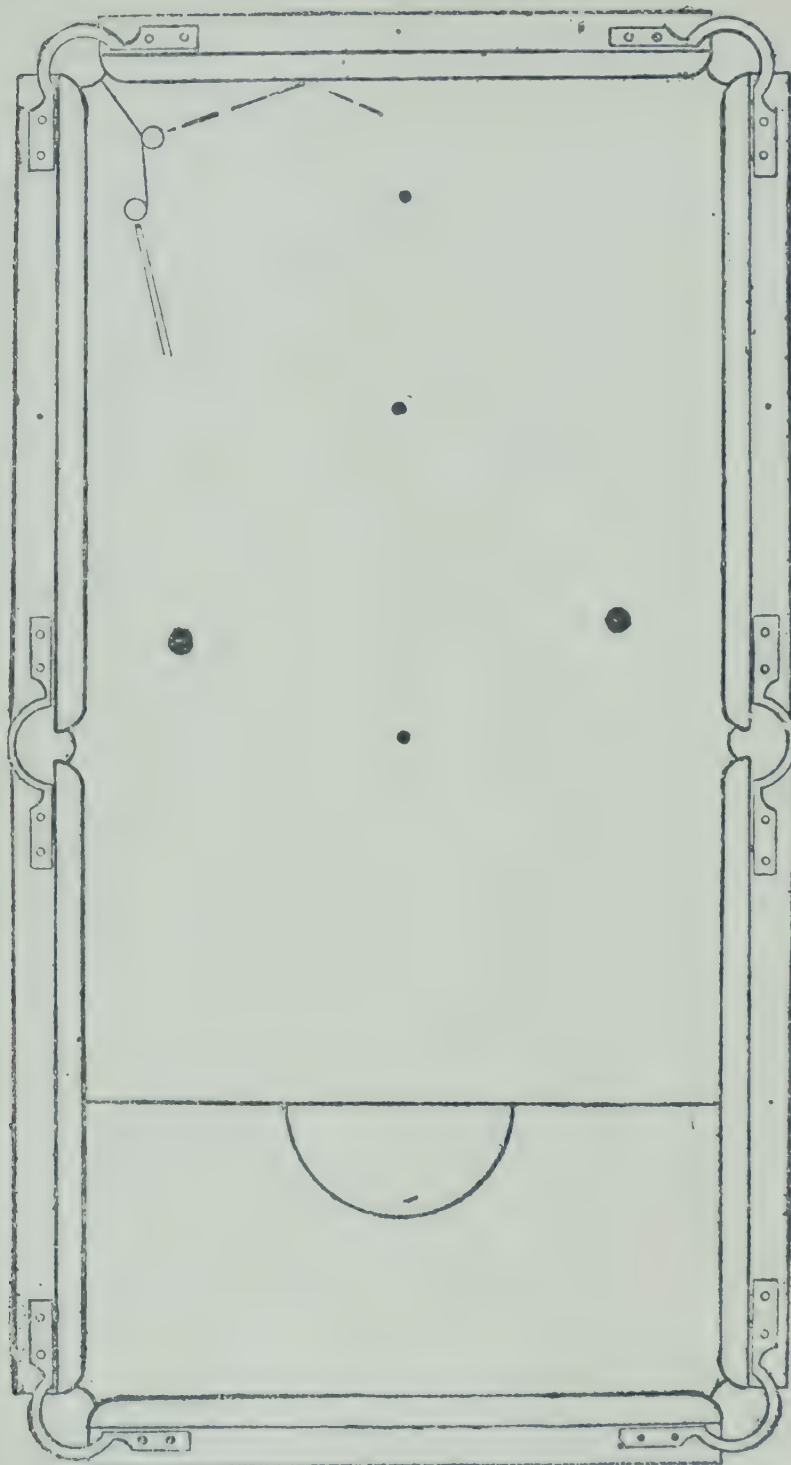


FIG. 52.—Cutting the white very thinly for the “drop” cannon leave (two positions).

on the “screw” stroke, how it is accomplished, and the general effects produced by it, should be re-read by

less advanced readers. They will be found, I think, of service in the manipulation of the strokes I am about to

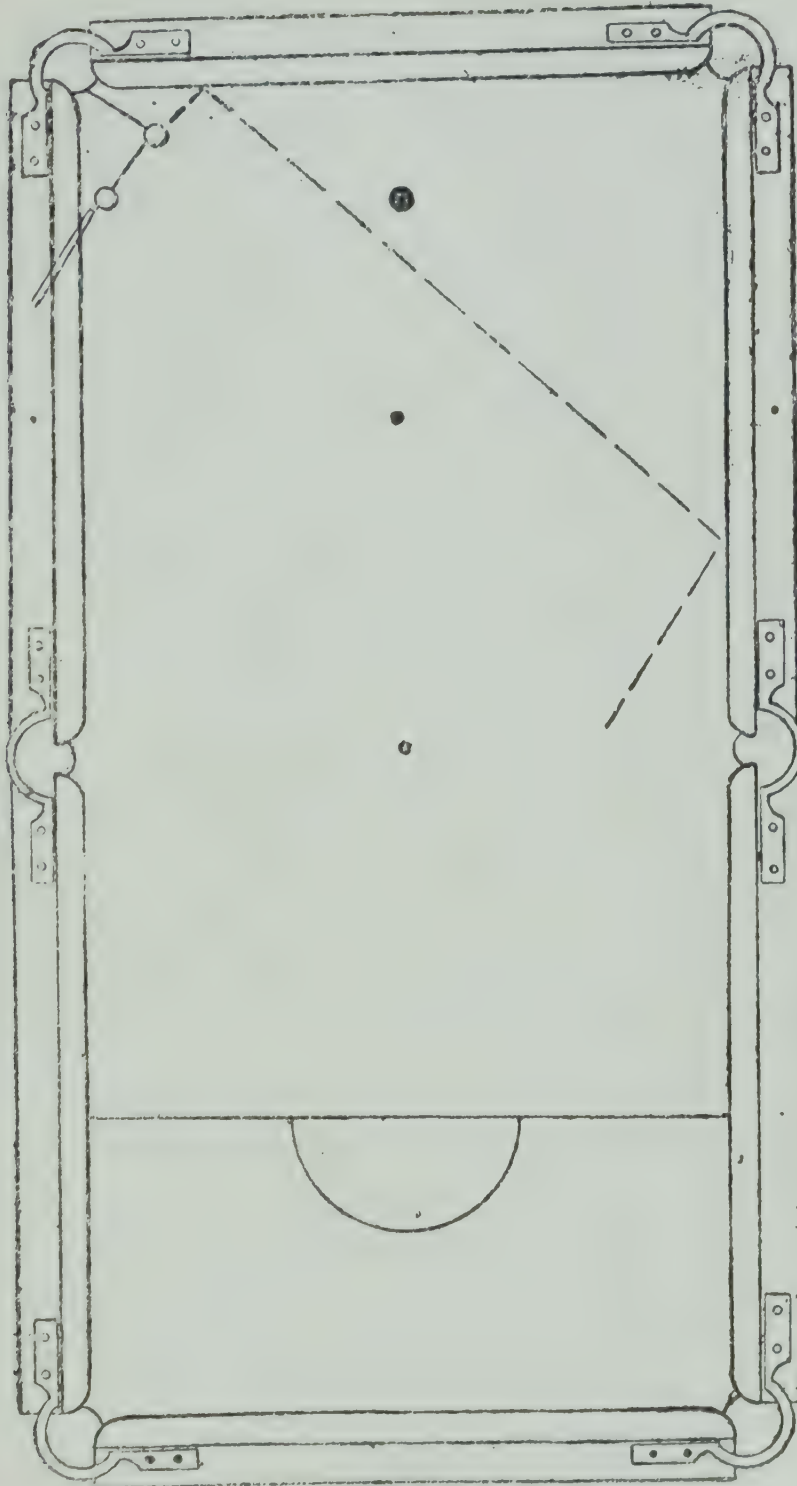


FIG. 53.—Screwing in off the white to open up a "drop" cannon.

bring forward. The "screw" stroke enables the fairly skilful player to obtain command over an object-ball

to an almost surprising extent. Out of the plain stroke line of fire (that is to say, presenting a much wider angle than the normal plain ball can cope with, unless great force and consequent uncertainty of the object-ball's stopping-place is thereby risked) it is the player's sheet anchor.

Take the placing of the balls on Fig. 53. The cue-ball is not nicely placed, for the only stroke that presents itself is the white losing hazard in the left top pocket, wide though the angle be ; but, being so close to the object-ball, it possesses a considerably greater advantage than if it had been some feet further down the table. For, like all other strokes, the "screw" and direction are much more easy of negotiation when the cue-ball and attacked object-ball are in close proximity than when a certain expanse of the table's surface separates them. This being so, it only follows as a matter of course that you also, in such an eventuality, can better control the direction of your object-ball. Close to the latter you may operate with "screw," either very thinly or very fully (the fuller stroke would come under the category of a "stun," the provisions of which I have explained). Both forms of stroke are serviceable, and are always determined in their application by the position that the second object-ball occupies. A half-ball contact with the object-ball is needed to enable the latter to drop into the line that will best bring about the "drop" cannon to follow upon. To gain this desired position you have to avoid a "kiss" with the red ball. You make the object-white pass in front of the latter by giving it such direction as your eye tells you will take it to that point of the table you know to

be the radius of the succeeding angle cannon to the red ball.

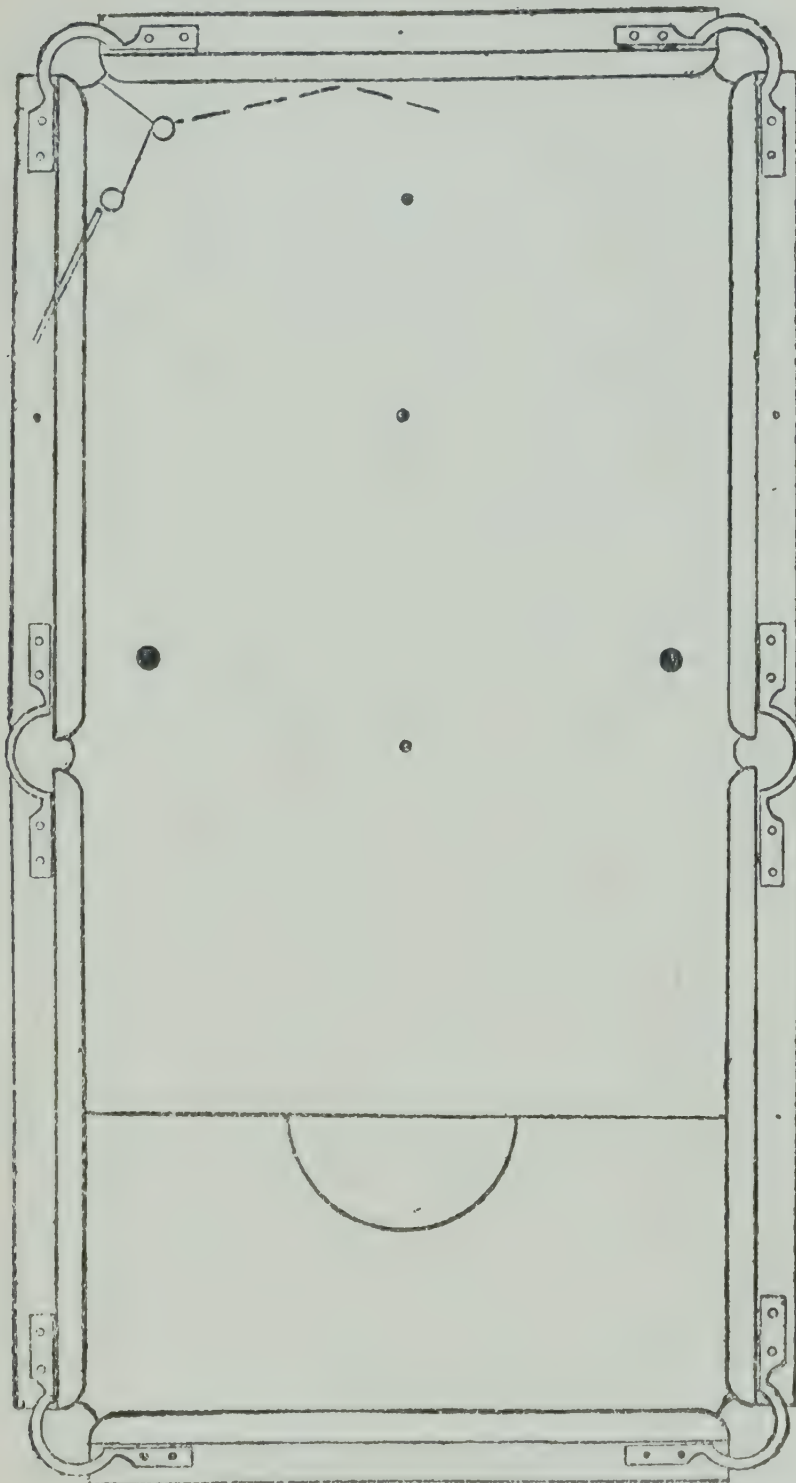


FIG. 54.—Thin, gentle screw, putting the white along the top cushion for the "drop" cannon (two positions).

On Fig. 54 a stroke of a widely different type is seen. The red ball has been removed to either side

of the table you may wish to place it (*vide* the two coloured balls represented on the figure). No alteration has been made in the previous positions of the white balls. There is still the same losing hazard available into the left upper pocket. But now, by reason of the removal of the red ball to another part of the table, the whole character of the stroke is changed. No longer does the half-ball "screw" hold out the hope of the inevitable "drop" cannon, which, by virtue of the unplayable situation of the red ball, is the only reliable medium of relief. But to emphasize the statement I made earlier, that "screw" strokes exercise much influence on the arrangement of the object-balls for the ever-recurring "drop" cannon, I now show how adaptable it is to circumstances. For now that the half-ball stroke is not "the game," you have recourse to a very "thin" "screw" stroke from the object-white, played as softly as your "touch" will allow. The middle of the top cushion, or thereabouts, is the objective point you map out for the resting-place of your object-ball. Having approximately gained it, you are again left in possession with the break-saving and break-creating "drop" cannon to continue with.

CHAPTER IV

*THE MANIPULATION OF THE OBJECT-BALLS
IN LOSING-HAZARD PLAY*

HAVING presented numerous examples of the formation of "drop" cannons when the losing-hazard position has been lost, and also in condensed style stated the general outline of the losing-hazard break, I now turn to the manipulation of the object-ball when the player operates from the D. I must add that the subject of the varying positions that may crop up during the course of losing-hazard play is practically unending. I could go on until I had wearied my readers of the whole thing. Instead, I prefer (and in all probability they do, too), having sketched the whole idea, to proceed with the more practical part, viz. the manipulation of the red ball (ever the player's scoring ball) in respect of its also manifold evolutions.

To begin with, I place the object-balls in the position which I designated at the onset of my remarks upon break-making to be their ideal location for losing-hazard play. Both present a simple losing hazard from the D into either centre pocket. Of course, the stroke to be played is as on Fig. 55, for considerations which I have explained at length on the merits of doing

your scoring from the coloured ball when effecting losing hazards from the baulk half-circle.

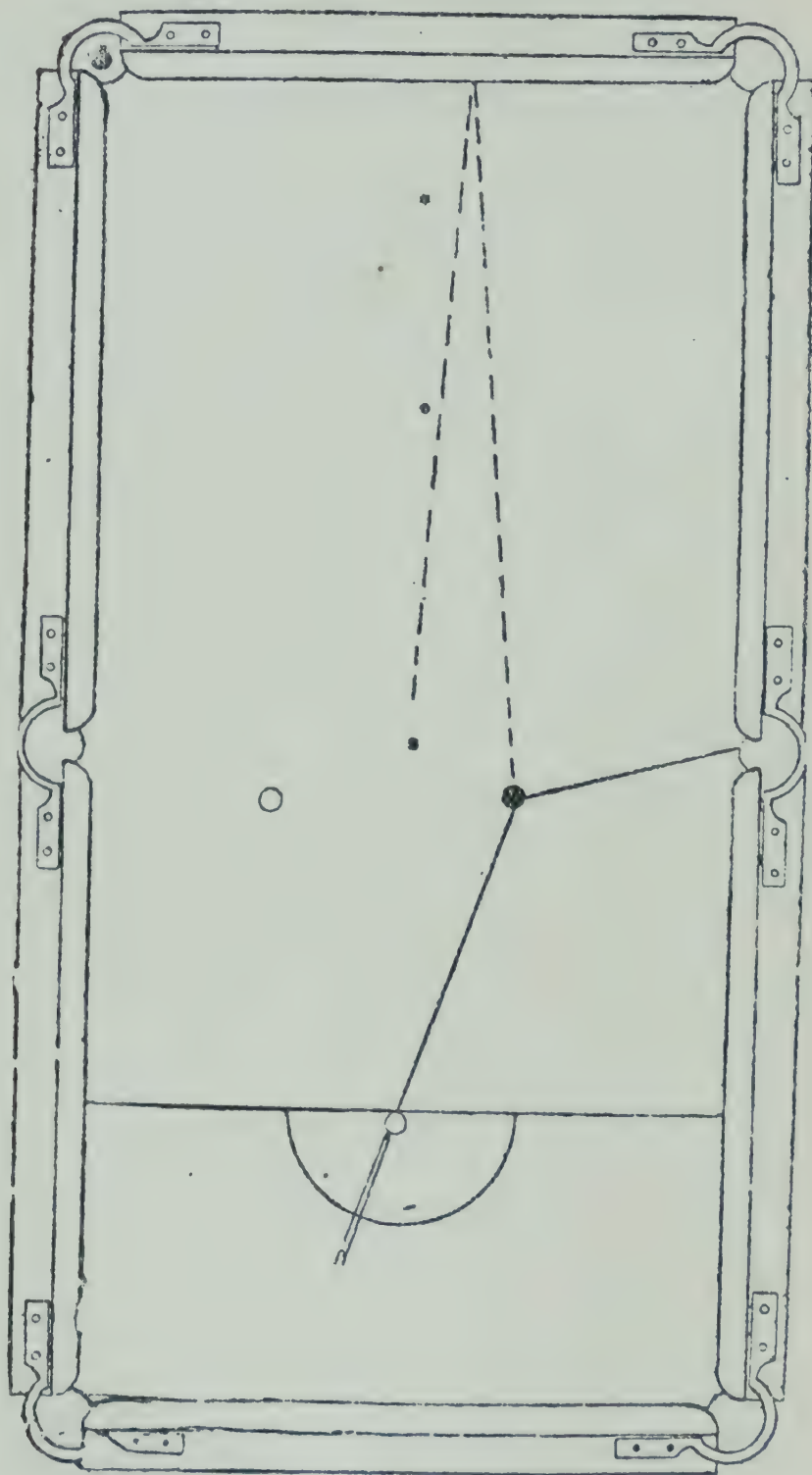


FIG. 55.—Commencing the "break" with a half-run-through losing hazard off the red.

In respect of this stroke from the red ball into the

right centre pocket, I have what I consider to be some interesting comments to make to the average of billiard players. It merely requires a plain half-ball one to account for the losing hazard. But the player's responsibility does not, or should not, stop at this. The making of the losing hazard is undoubtedly the main feature of the stroke, a fact which is possibly too obvious to deserve mention. At the same time, however, the controlling of the attacked ball *must* receive its due meed of attention. I have earlier on demarcated that portion of the table that an object-ball should be directed to—following upon a losing hazard being scored from it—anywhere within the central line of the table so as to permit of optional play into either of the top pockets, or one or other or both of the middle ones, the latter for choice.

Well, the controlling or directing of the played object-ball has as much to do with the skilful concerted series of strokes inseparable to what I term the losing-hazard form of break, as has the success of each individual attempt to score. Watch the giants of the game, and note, when they are called upon to play upon tables that they are little or quite unaccustomed to, how they tenderly handle the played object-ball, no matter how favourably it may be located for a return to an easy losing-hazard position. Knowledge begot by long experience tells them that it is safer to induce direction to the object-ball than perfect position (an optional inlet into either middle pocket). They invariably lack, in reality they never attempt, such perfect "strength" when playing on what is practically a strange table to them. They feel their way. At

first you will observe the object-ball, though keeping its true direction, come little below the pyramid spot, leaving, of course, an angle "loser" into whichever top pocket the player may select. Gradually, as the manipulator gains touch with the running of the table (and there are no two tables that have ever run exactly alike, whilst the extremes of pace, and want of it, in them are separated by the widest gulf), he makes the object-ball come nearer and nearer to the middle spot. Then, as he has measured the force that controls its running, the freedom of the stroke is such that he attains the summit of a player's ambition in losing-hazard manipulation—the bringing of the object-ball to a point between a foot and eighteen inches below the middle spot. This enables a comfortable "loser" into one or other—just as the game demands—of the centre pockets, an ideal "leave." And if it is good policy for the great billiard luminaries to so feel their way to the desired haven when doubt looms ahead, we may depend upon it that an underlying security lurks around this procedure. I endorse every point of it from personal observance and experience.

Having stated so much anent the object-ball's direction, I now revert to Fig. 55, and commence my operations on the coloured ball. I take it that I am playing upon a table, the running of which is foreign to me. Thus, as I have pointed out, it behoves me to proceed with due caution. I make the losing hazard, and keeping the object-ball to the middle of the table, it returns some four or five inches above the middle spot, as the termination of the dotted lines extending from the coloured ball will show. I have not made

a perfect stroke, yet I have left the two top pockets open to me by directing the object-ball to mid-field. These I make my objective, on the principle that I have put forward of making the red the scoring ball whenever a losing hazard from it is a probable contingency. That is, as I stated, when the disposition of the object-white is such that it permits of your turning to it for an easy stroke in case you make an ill-judged one (though you may score) from the red. Otherwise, had your object-white been out of the range of losing hazard it would have been "the game" to endeavour to reopen up on the best terms you could secure for yourself optional losing hazard play off *both* object-balls (with the white merely acting as the red's safeguard).

But as matters resolve themselves, the object-white could not be more favourably situated should the red ball be badly directed after you have made your losing hazard. So I use the red again for my second stroke. I look at the situation of the balls, and disdain the primitive cannon that may or may not catch my eye, seeing that I am on losing hazards bent, and from which nothing but the closing up of all reasonably possible passages to the pockets will turn me. So I set myself a losing hazard into the right top pocket. My reasons for selecting this pocket are twofold. First, the position of the object-white renders a judgment of the desired angle to the left top pocket very difficult, as it partially obscures the opening there from view. This, as most may know, often conduces to what would otherwise be inexplicable failures. Secondly, there is a danger—rather remote, I will grant—of the

red ball returning from its lengthy run over the angles of the upper half of the table and "kissing" the object-white from its present most favourable position. And on these grounds I play the long losing hazard into the right top pocket—and I make it.

Now on this long losing hazard I must again digress. It is one of the most influential strokes connected with the game of billiards. It has stood the test of time, and still is so considered by those best capable of judging. John Roberts has declared for it as the best stroke that any one, no matter his degree of skill, can practise. Technically it is known as the long "half-ball" losing hazard. I know of no stroke that demands more of the player, nor any that more adequately rewards him for its successful execution. All that is needful is plenty of exercise upon it, with which only will the requisite proficiency and (what is equally important) confidence come. The angle lines thrown from side cushion to side cushion towards baulk *via* the top embankment imprint themselves in the mind's eye by practice of the long "half-ball" or "natural angle" losing hazard. The average player's limited purview of the possibilities of the game visibly broadens as he becomes acquainted with it and its attendant advantages. It evolves a nice free delivery of cue, and an appreciation of the true striking of the object-ball which few other strokes can do.

In my plain-ball strokes lessons I showed how the gaining of the "half-ball" contact with an object-ball could be reduced to the same certainty that mathematical science is *supposed* to bring. This gaining of the true line of contact—always providing that the player's pose

is solid and unwavering, with which comes accurate striking of the ball—comes with the cue's direction at the edge of the object-ball. Such proceeding guarantees an impact known as "half-ball," from which ensues the most acute, or most accurate projected angle, that any plain-ball stroke can effect. The losing hazard specimens on Figs. 56 and 57 are played without "side." And following the rule that the nearer the object-ball is to the player the higher he strikes the cue-ball, and the greater the intervening space between them the lower he should strike it to keep it in its true course, in these two instances the cue-ball is struck fairly high up. By so doing you avoid transmitting any unintentional "side" or "screw" to it, that often comes with a low delivery of the cue's point. Trivial as they may appear to some, these points are, nevertheless, of the greatest value.

The long "half-ball" losing hazard must still be the text of my remarks. It presents such a wide field for commentary upon the advantages that its cultivation will certainly yield. A flowing stroke is its chief demand, for cramped delivery of the cue (a too prevalent failing with the great majority) cannot give to it the accuracy and effectiveness that is required. Let the cue go right through the cue-ball cleanly and crisply. The preliminary running of the cue to and fro along the "bridge" will help wonderfully in bringing this about. Do not send the cue forth to make the stroke until you have satisfied yourself that you have the measure of the case, and a proper estimate of the "strength" and angle that are required.

Reverting to Fig. 56, this shows a long "loser" from the D into the right top pocket made by a plain-ball

(struck fairly high up) stroke, and a half-ball contact

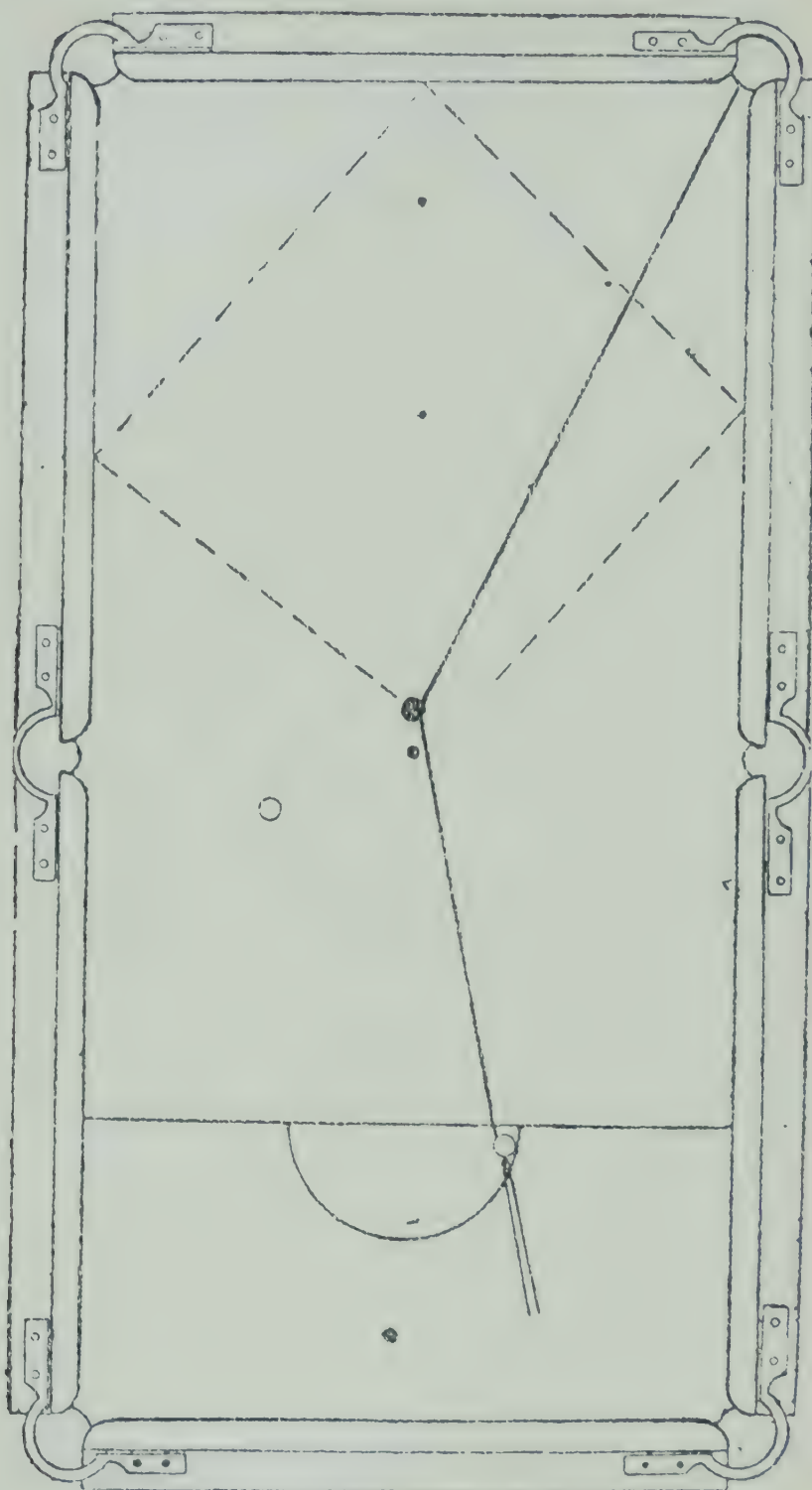


FIG. 56.—A long losing hazard making the red ball take the three upper cushions before returning into play again.

with the object-ball. The latter is driven around the upper half of the table, as the dotted lines show, it being

the player's desire, in this and all similar strokes, to bring the object-ball *between* the middle pockets for losing-hazard play therein. If not in these, then into the top pockets. Anyway, the idea is to make the object-ball keep in the centre of the table (there are exceptions to this as to other rules, when force of circumstances so dictate, and they will be shown presently). The diagram (56) I put before you shows the losing hazard accomplished, but though the direction of the object-ball is good, it is not perfect. I have not made quite a half-ball contact with it, as I desired to do, having struck it a trifle thinner than that, with the result that it has taken a wider and, consequently, more prolonged circuit of the table than it otherwise would have done. This proceeding has caused a lack of "strength," yet I have left myself a losing hazard in the left top pocket to follow on with. Now, before I proceed to make this stroke, I must say a few words on the theory of the object-ball's direction in these long "half-ball" losing hazards.

A perfect manipulation of the hazard, as produced by a perfect half-ball impact between the cue-ball and object-ball, will send the latter towards the middle spot of the D, as on Fig. 57. That is the ideal stroke, as I say. But it is a matter of impossibility to gain such an impact on every occasion. As a matter of fact, the player may strike the object-ball differently half a dozen or a dozen times consecutively, and yet make the losing hazard. The knowledge that he had struck the ball differently would not come from the eye, for the difference would not be appreciable in that way, but simply by the running of the object-ball. It partakes of the same nature as the

striking of the cue-ball (or, rather, to attempt to) on its

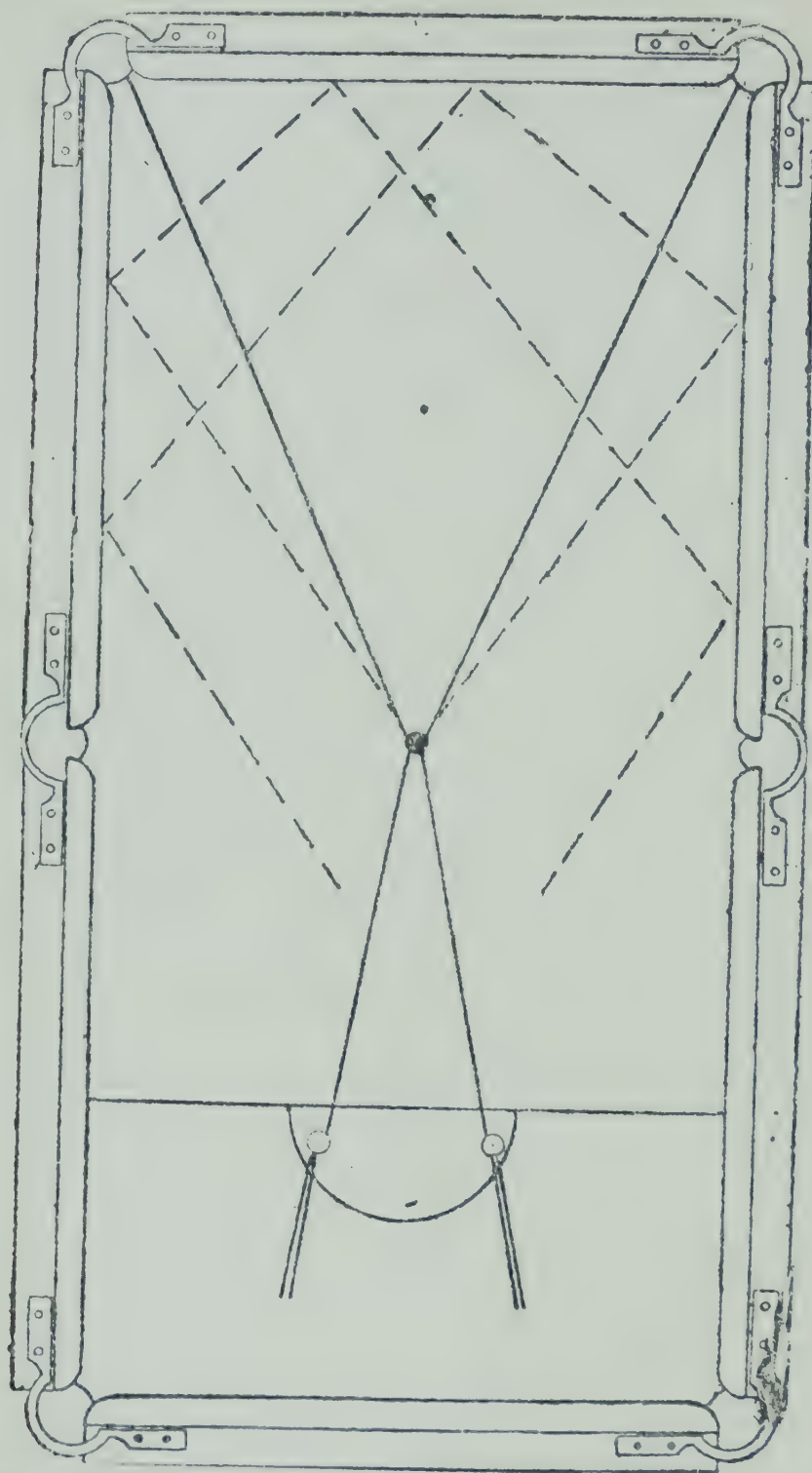


FIG. 57.—The ideal return of the red in the long half-ball losing-hazard play.

centre, which no man, no matter how certain his delivery, can guarantee to do. He can get very near to it, but a

dead central stroke is again the ideal (like the true half-ball contact), which is "like angels' visits," etc.

The worst fault that arises in the manipulation of this long "half-ball" losing hazard is when the object-ball is struck fuller than the regulation half-ball. Then it is driven so far up the top side cushion as to render its after-position a dubious one. It may catch in the jaws of the middle pockets, or, which is worse, run on to the baulk side cushions. Further, the fuller contact has put so much more pace into its running that there is the fear of getting it behind the baulk line. Thus it is better to "cut" (if such a thinnish half-ball contact as shown on Fig. 56 can be so termed) than drive it. The first keeps it in the line of losing-hazard fire, or somewhere near to it, whilst the driving, or fullish stroke, is attended with dangerous consequences. I consider the player who can control the object-ball in the strokes that I am speaking of, so that it gets to mid-field range, or even as on Fig. 56, to be a more dependable manipulator of it than the one who brings it very little above the middle pockets. The latter is certain, sooner or later, to get into trouble.

I now sketch, on Fig. 58, what are the best angle-lines that an object-ball should take in this long "half-ball" losing hazard. The two top-side cushions and the top cushions may be termed the playable cushions for the object-ball. The remaining three, generally, are not. Both baulk side cushions, however, come into use in short and long "jenny" play, and when an object-ball is passing through baulk. In the latter eventuality only does the baulk end cushion come under the category of a playable one. The further the player can keep the object-ball away from the two baulk side cushions in

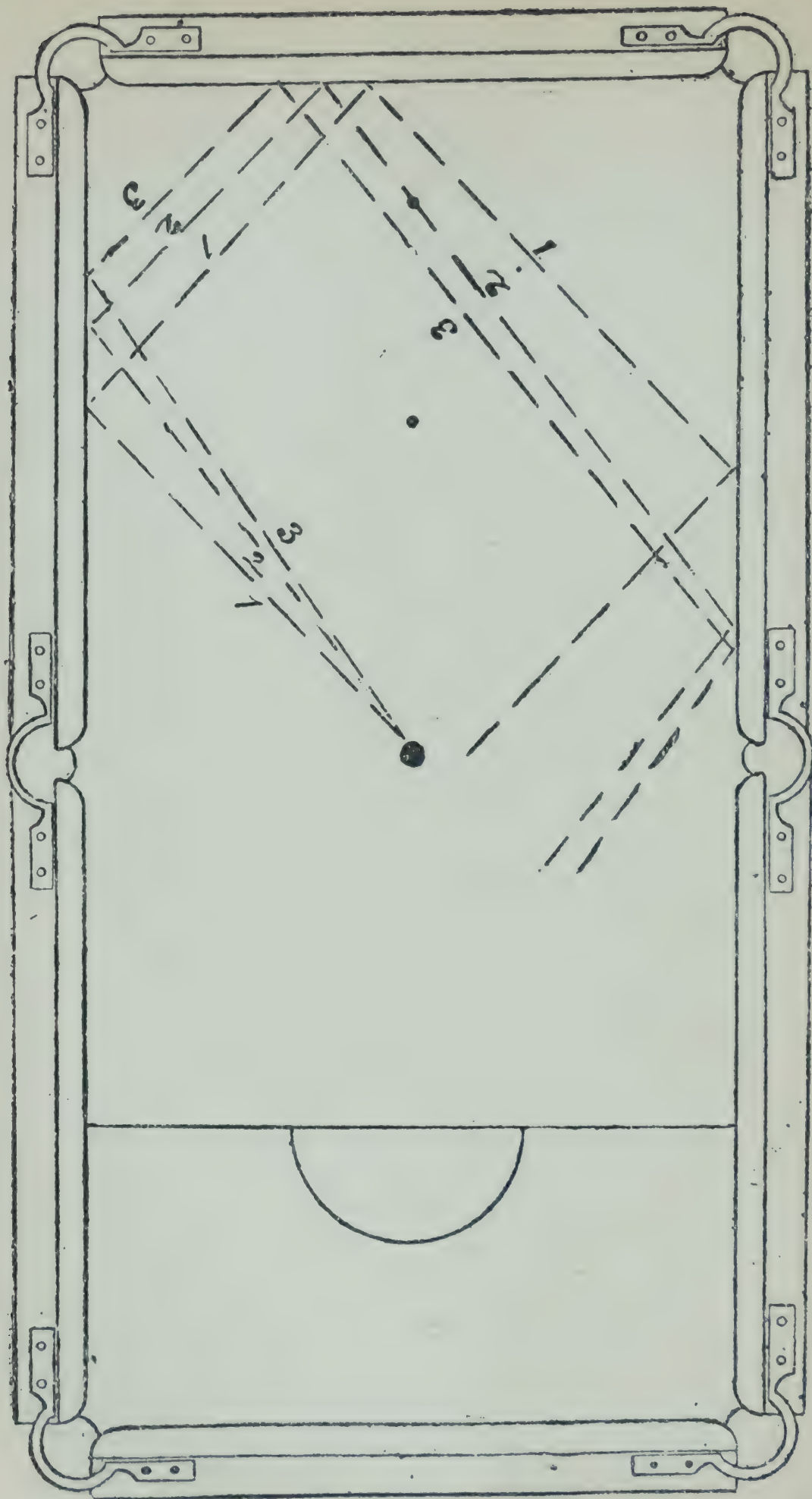


FIG. 58.—Favourable movements of the object-ball back to position in long losing-hazard play.

long "half-ball" losing hazard, and yet bring it into mid-field, or approximate mid-field, play (for instance, as on Fig. 57), the safer and sounder player do I consider him to be.

Having said so much anent the execution and demands of long losing-hazard play, I return to the stroke as per Fig. 56. I have played the red ball a trifle short of true "strength"—that is, taking the middle line of the table as the objective point. But I have the left top pocket open to me, and I play for it. Before doing so, I, of course, take my bearings, and choose the position that I think will best suit the red ball. For reasons which I have given (I am keeping my white ball over the left middle pocket until scoring losing hazards from the red ball becomes very doubtful) I do not want the coloured ball to come too close to the object-white. A free half-ball stroke will, however, bring it there. Any one conversant with the angles of a billiard table will see that this is so. For those who are not, I illustrate on Fig. 59 the correct manner of playing the stroke. All that is needed is to use a moiety of force, as compared with the demands of the long losing hazard. It would be dangerous to play it with greater pace by reason of the imminent "kiss" with the white object-ball, not to mention the bad direction the red has subsequently to take. A medium-pace stroke, or slightly under, will take the red ball to the vicinity of the pyramid spot, its safest location. I have brought it an inch or two below it, and have an optional "loser" in either top pocket.

On Fig. 60 I show my next stroke—a "loser" into the left top corner pocket, with the idea of getting the red ball into the middle of the table, ostensibly for

middle-pocket losing-hazard play. I make it with a

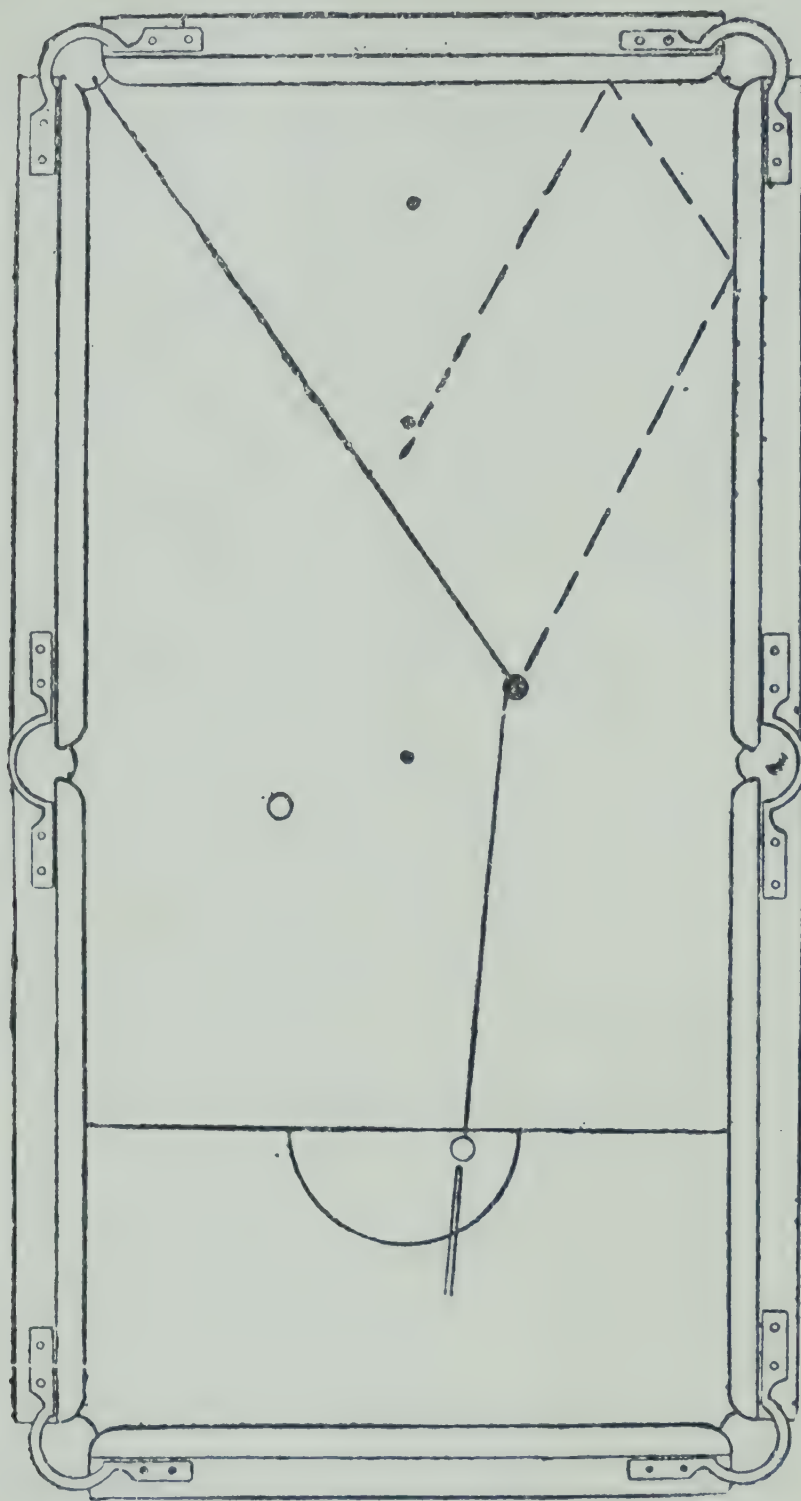


FIG. 59.—A slow, long losing hazard leaving the red by the pyramid spot.

rather fine “half-ball” freely played stroke, which is needed to bring the object ball into the desired position.

The chief fault that I have found with those to whom I

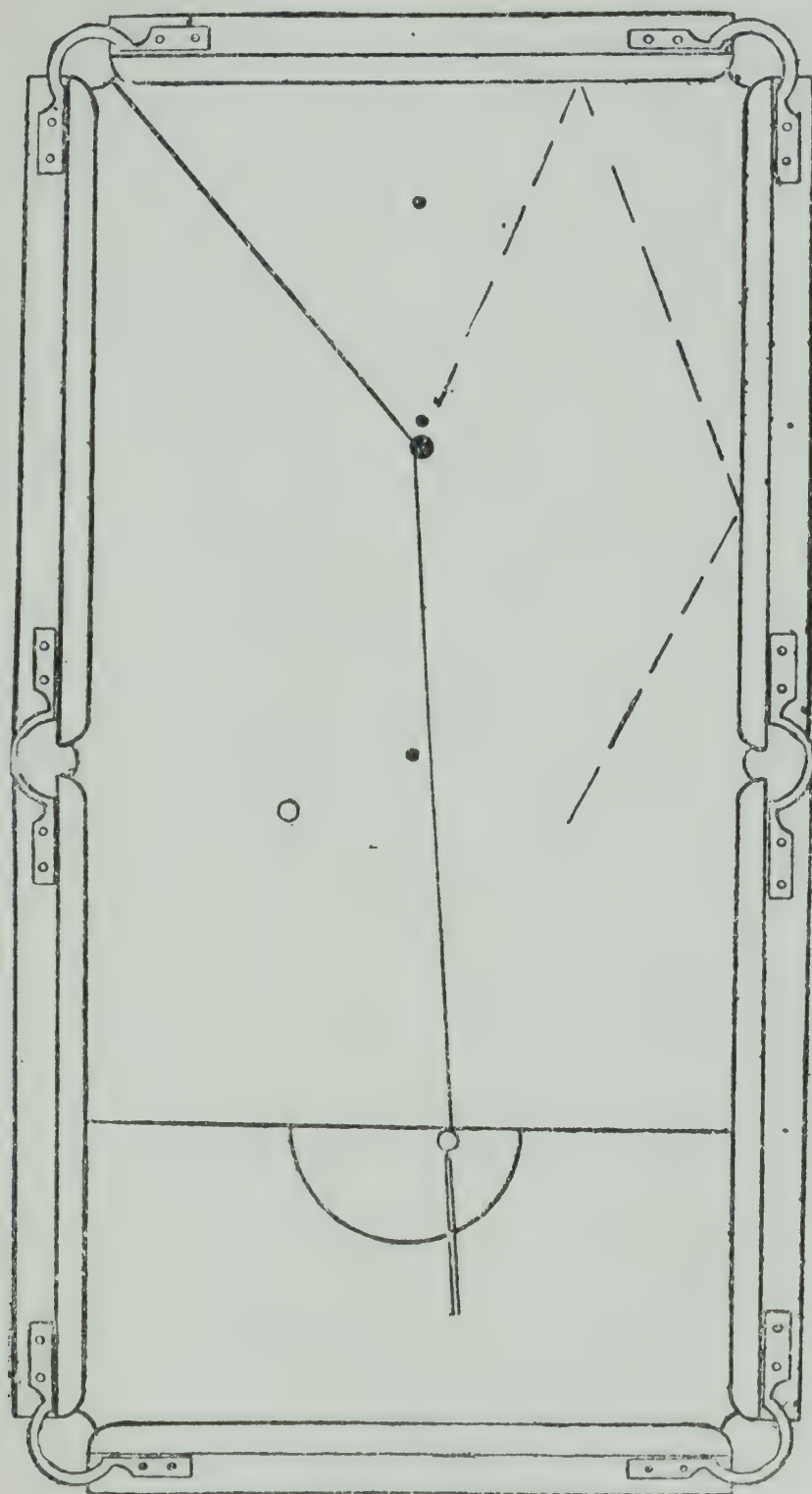


FIG. 60.—In off the red and keeping it placed for the losing hazards.

have given instruction in this top pocket losing hazard has generally been their inability to negotiate the

hazard. They have, as a rule, carried out my idea of the requisite strength fairly well. But it has been the easy losing hazard which has proved the stumbling-block. They have placed the cue-ball to form what appears to be a natural angle into the pocket from the object-ball. But as often as not they have failed. The reason is that there is something partaking of the nature of an optical illusion in this top-pocket work. And fully 90 per cent. of the failures arise from the cue-ball striking the side cushion. If the work of the professional cueists in this department of the game is watched, it will be noted that they invariably make the cue-ball brush against the top-cushion "shoulder" of the pocket, unless the ball goes cleanly in. To strike the side cushion is to practically mean failure in top-pocket losing-hazard play. Therefore direct the *cue-ball* at the top-cushion "shoulder" (especially in the slightly fine half-ball strokes, in which you are called upon to use "side"). This rule will, however, be found useful in all cases of long losing-hazard-play execution.

Returning to Fig. 60, I have executed the left top pocket "loser," and have brought the red, if not exactly to where I intended, at any rate in the field of losing-hazard play. It presents a "loser" into the right middle pocket. The angle at which I shall have to play the stroke will not permit of a half-ball contact with the red to keep it in the central line of the table as it comes back from the top cushion. I have to strike it more fully than that. I still use a plain ball stroke, and with the idea of bringing the red into position for the cherished middle pocket losing hazard, I play as Fig. 61 shows. On this illustration it will be seen that

I have played the shot pretty well. But I am un-

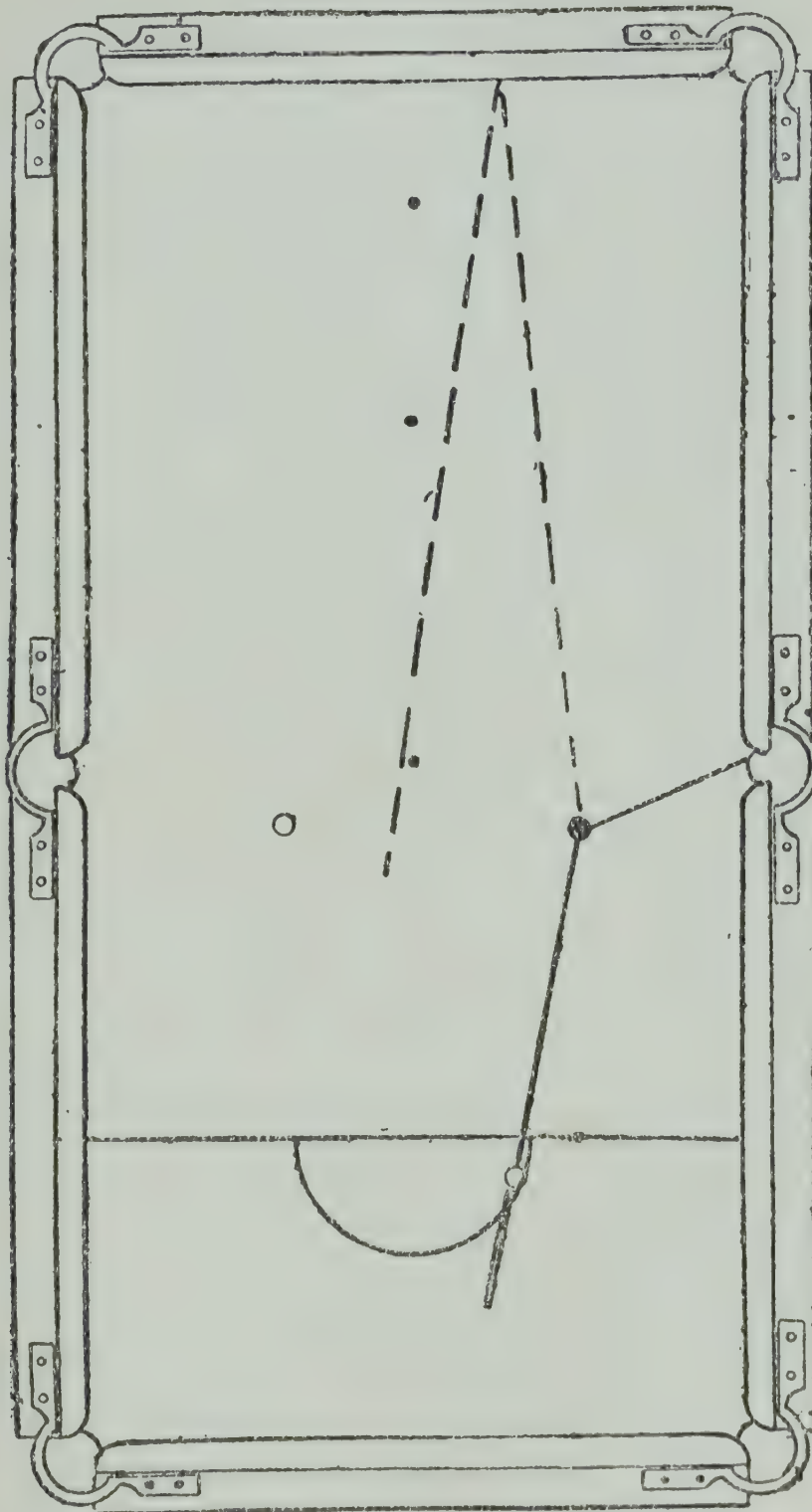


FIG. 61.—A plain half-run-through shot sending the red into the midst of the table.

fortunate, inasmuch that the presence of the object-white

prevents my going for the only pocket—the left centre one—that I have really open to me. The long “loser” into the right top corner pocket is too difficult. If a player felt confidence in his ability to make it, I should advise him to play it by all means. But if I know anything about the subject, there are not many who would fancy the shot. The more experienced and the better the player, the more he looks out for something easy of execution. And what could be easier than the left middle pocket losing hazard from the object-white? A player would naturally turn to this for the scoring medium, no matter his degree of skill. It is, of course, so obvious. Further, in clearing the object-white ball, a passage from the red ball (which has until then been precluded) is opened up. But think of how you will dispose of your object-white! Reason it out for yourselves! Suppose some one asked you, looking at the position of the three balls as represented on Fig. 61, “Where would you like to have the object-white after making your losing hazard from it?” I take it that none of you would think a very long while before answering: “Why, over the middle pocket, of course.” And that is where I try to direct it. I try to get the object-white as well placed for a losing hazard into the right middle pocket as it has hitherto been situated for one into the left. Before I go on with the stroke I should like to point out that the example I have just given of a question being asked as to how the player would dispose of an object-ball after scoring from it, is really the essence of great billiard playing. You say or think to yourself, I will score and make the ball, or balls, go to such and such a position, it being in your

idea the most likely for an easy stroke to continue with. When the novice or average player gets to do this sort of thing systematically, he is on the threshold of certain improvement. But, of course, his trials and tribulations await him. It is not to say that he will have the balls left in certain positions after the stroke, the crowning difficulty is to reach that standard of ability which will ensure him the skill and knowledge to ensure his control over them. How much greater tax upon his powers the command of all three balls (as in top-of-the-table play) will be as compared with the more modest, but still highly remunerative, losing-hazard play, in which for the most part the running of but *one ball* has to be considered.

Digressions from the main point are part and parcel of billiard teaching, and my continual side-trackings, I hope, will not be thought too many or too lengthy. They crop up in natural sequence. Reverting to Fig. 62, I present thereon my attempt to transfer the object-white from its position over the left middle pocket to a similar one over the opposite centre receptacle. Just a plain half-ball stroke is all that is needed, save and beyond the all-important matter of "strength." As will be seen, I have fallen a foot or so short of my objective, though the direction of the ball was good. But still, I have kept it in the field of losing-hazard operations, for it leaves me with an opening to the left top pocket. This, of course, I do not play for, as the "loser" from the red into the left middle pocket is so very simple, and is more productive of points than the other. So I play it (see Fig. 63). Nice medium-pace plain half-ball to bring the red ball back down the central line of

the table, again with an eye to the middle pockets, but if short of "strength," then to the top ones. This time,

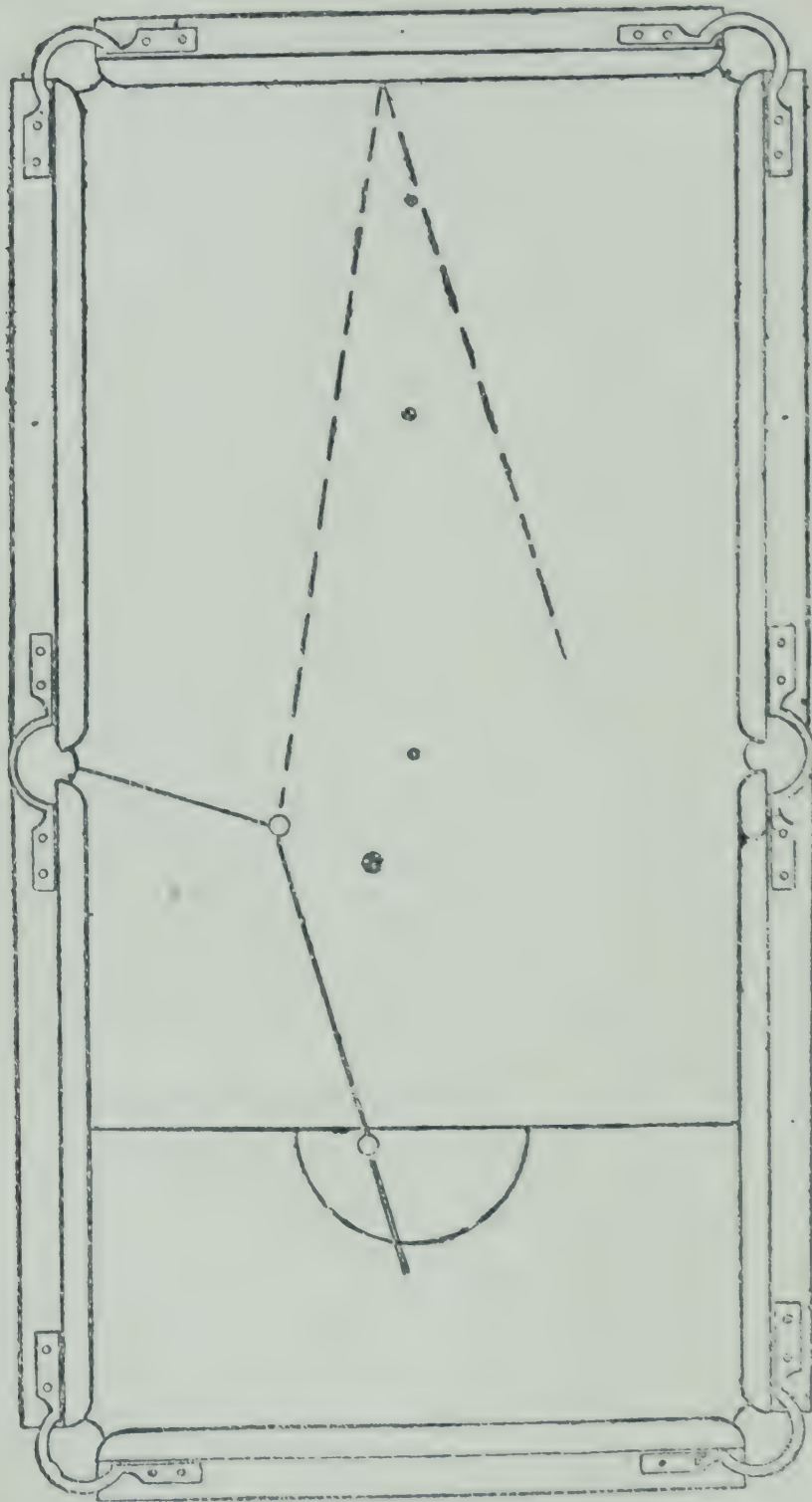


FIG. 62.—Clearing the way for the losing hazard off the red.

however, I make a bad stroke. I score, but I make a bad contact (much finer than I intended) with the

object-ball. Result—as the dotted lines show—it comes

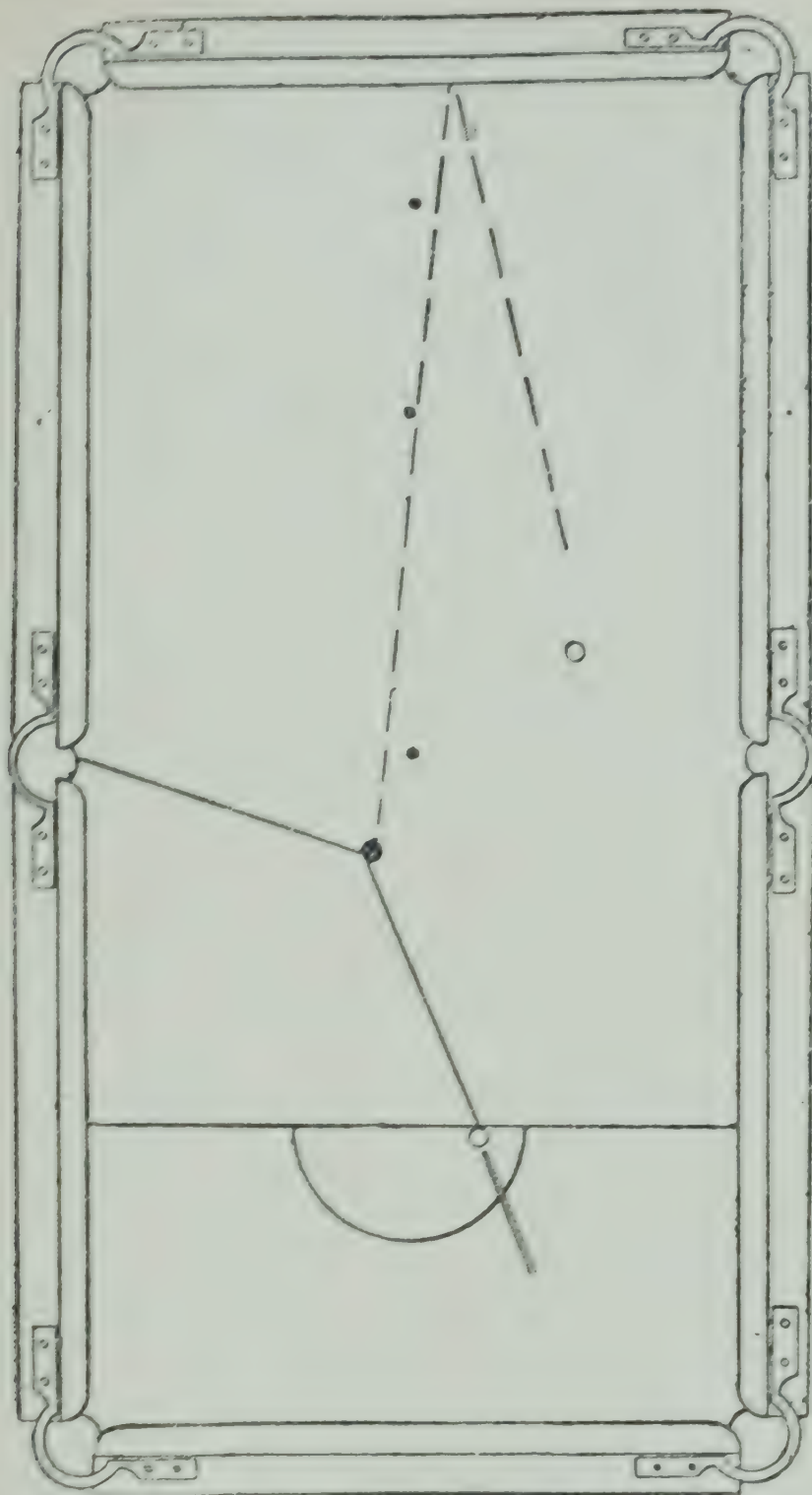


FIG. 63.—A bad stroke. The red is taken too thinly, and is covered up by the white.

from the top cushion behind the object-white, preventing my attacking it, although, were it not covered, I

could have made a "loser" from it into the left top corner pocket. Still, I am not half beaten, as the object-white is at my disposal for a like stroke. This I go out for with a strong half-ball stroke, trying to make the object-white come into desirable play over the middle pockets on the principle of the strokes I showed last week. But I make another bad stroke, though it is a scoring one. This time I strike the object-ball too fully, and bring it around the upper half of the table much too near the left middle pocket to be pleasant (see Fig. 64). I nearly lose it (illustrating one of the drawbacks that attend on poor manipulation); but, as luck will have it, the ball catches the point of the pocket's upper "shoulder," and runs down towards baulk. Stopping about a foot short of the line it is practically out of play, at least so far as my losing hazards are concerned.

The value of combination between the object-balls as a means to recovery of position in the "losing-hazard break" comes to the fore again. I have, by the removal of the object-white from its masking of the red ball, reopened negotiations with the latter, and it now provides the agency by which I redeem the object-white from its unfavourable placing. As I pointed out, I had a losing hazard from the red left to me had not the object-white covered it after my first bad stroke. I now avail myself of it. Another strong and complete half-ball stroke is what I bring into play. I endeavour to bring the red down to the white to rescue it from its poor position on the principle (as stated at the outset of the "losing-hazard break") that it is permissible to leave the object-balls together when the player is close

to them. I play to bring the red ball in close proximity

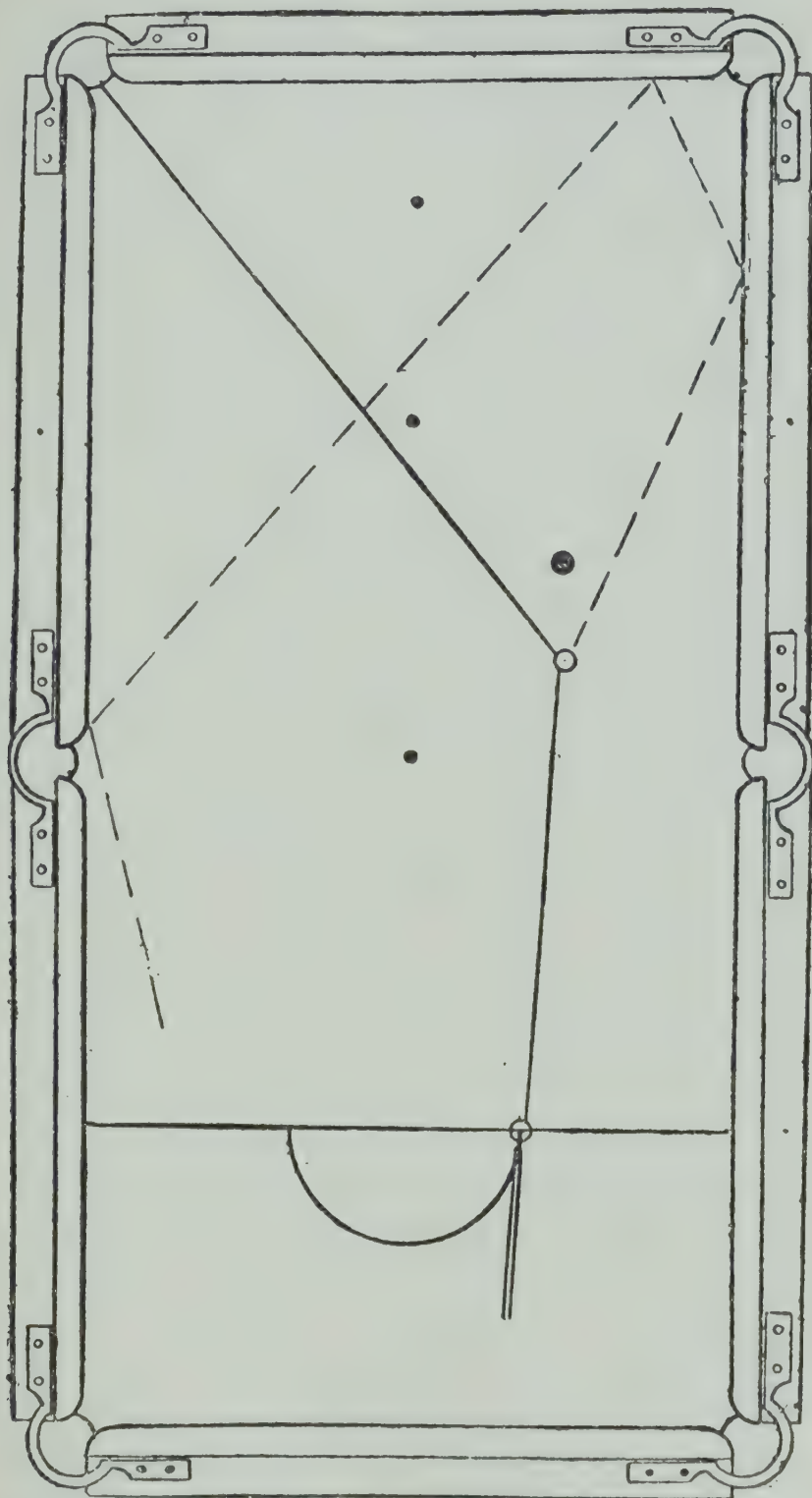


FIG. 64.—The white gets out of play through striking a middle-pocket "shoulder."

to the object-white, and with what success Fig. 65 will show.

It exemplifies the second principle of the game that I gave, which stated that it was permissible to leave the

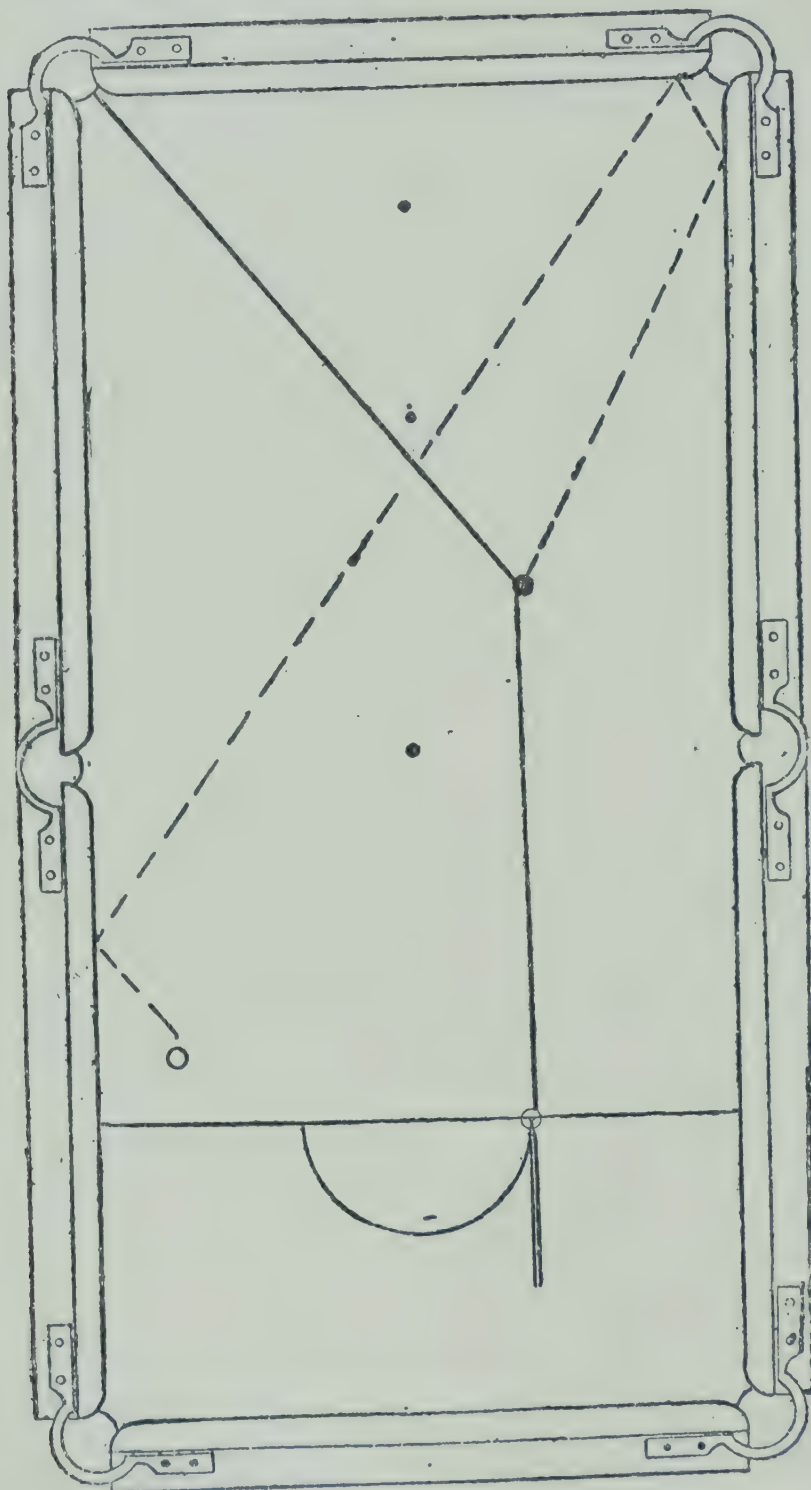


FIG. 65.—Bringing the red down to the assistance of the white.

object-balls close together when near to the player, but to abstain as far as possible from doing so when they

are any distance away. An interesting commentary on the stroke is, I think, that what would, under ordinary circumstances, have been two bad strokes (the two losing hazards which took the object-balls out of the field of play) now combine to make one good one. For no fairly capable player could wish for a much more simple stroke than is provided for him by the outcome of the attuning of the one object-ball's movement to that of its companion's. A sounder object-lesson of the advantage of possessing a key-ball I do not think there well could be. Also, it makes manifest the safeguarding of control over the balls by reason of having the option of two losing hazards. That is the real secret of the losing-hazard break, the ever-present desire to work the balls into position for TWO losing hazards. A preference, of course, is extended to having these in the middle pockets, thereby producing more certain control of the object-balls and greater accuracy of strokes. But if not to the middle pockets then open up a connection with the top ones, which indubitably will be found the stepping-stone in due course to the centre receptacles. Playing billiards by method (as it should always be played, that is, if any definite results are aimed at) resolves itself into one allotted thing—the continual trying by the player to work up to the ideal of easy positions. It is so with the professors of the art. Watch them in their top-of-the-table play. Note when they lose position there how they strive to regain it by means of the invaluable "drop cannon" from the D. They keep on trying to do the same thing. No opportunist system this, but one which is dictated by knowledge and experience. It is mechanical in its

outline, lacking only the precision of mechanism to render it perfect. The more cultured the player the nearer will he get to this (though, naturally, always falling very far short of) perfection. This is break-making on its only true principle.

Resuming upon my break with the balls as on Fig. 65, and feeling somewhat elated at having so well surmounted the difficulties which had beset me, I proceed to make a cannon. It is, of course, the only stroke open to me. With an idea of reopening up my TWO losing hazards (the position of the balls does not lend itself to a straight-away manipulation of this) at the second, or, perhaps, the third stroke. So I play very gently to keep the balls close together. In all close cannon operations the player is to *leave the object-balls in front of the cue-ball*. To get the cue-ball between the object-balls is to court instant failure. The close cannon on Fig. 66 demands that to ensure immunity from this undesirable happening the object-white must be struck almost, if not quite, full. It will then go forward to the side cushion, coming away from there to join the red as the latter moves forward when cannoned upon. You judge its destined course by the eye. Placing the cue-ball several inches down in the baulk half-circle on the point shown, I drop fully on the object-white, using a little right "side" to prevent my ball being masked or "covered" by the red. The object-white is bound by the manner of its being struck to go forward. Had I struck it half-ball or placed my ball further to the right I should, in all probability, have found my ball between the two others, the very thing I desire to avoid. By keeping the game an open

one (not trying to hold the three balls too closely together, for hidden dangers often crop up from attempting this) I have evaded my ball getting so placed. But I have not played the stroke any too well, and, but for the right "side" I have used, the balls would certainly have been left in a direct line. As many may know, "side" tells very perceptibly when

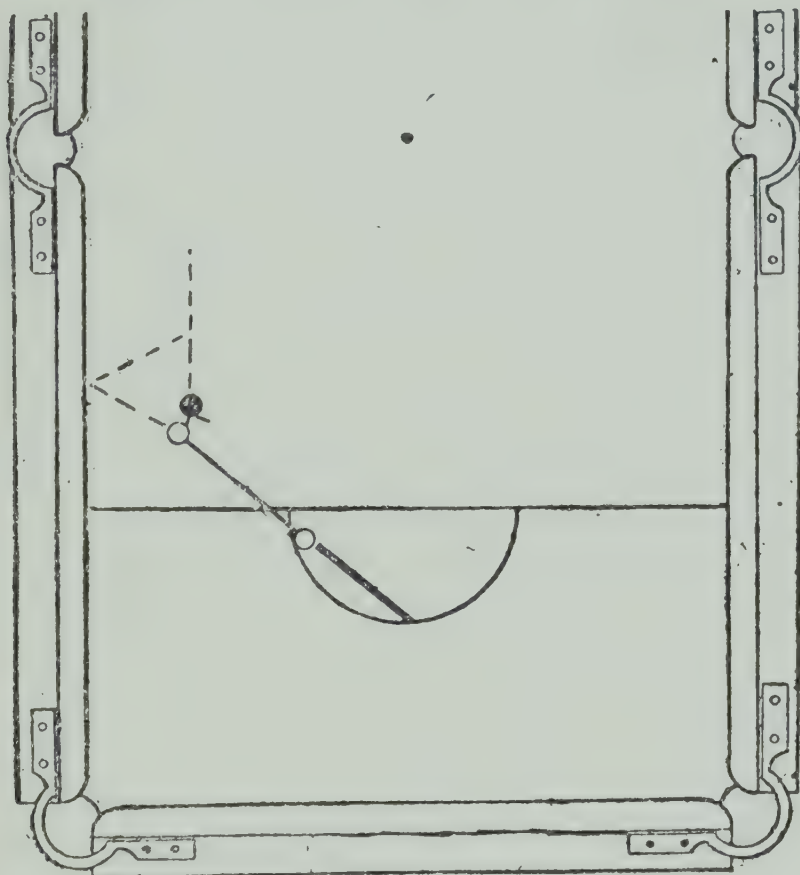


FIG. 66.—Playing a gentle cannon from the D to try and work the balls into shape for the losing hazards.

falling upon a rigid object. Whichever bias the cue-ball carries takes it, when it falls upon the second object-ball, further to the right or to the left (analogous with the "side" used) than a plain-ball stroke would. In the cannon I have played, the right "side" has saved me from having left myself an awkward cushion cannon. Instead, my ball went a trifle to the right

after falling fully on the red, and by so doing it affords me a "run through," as per Fig. 67.

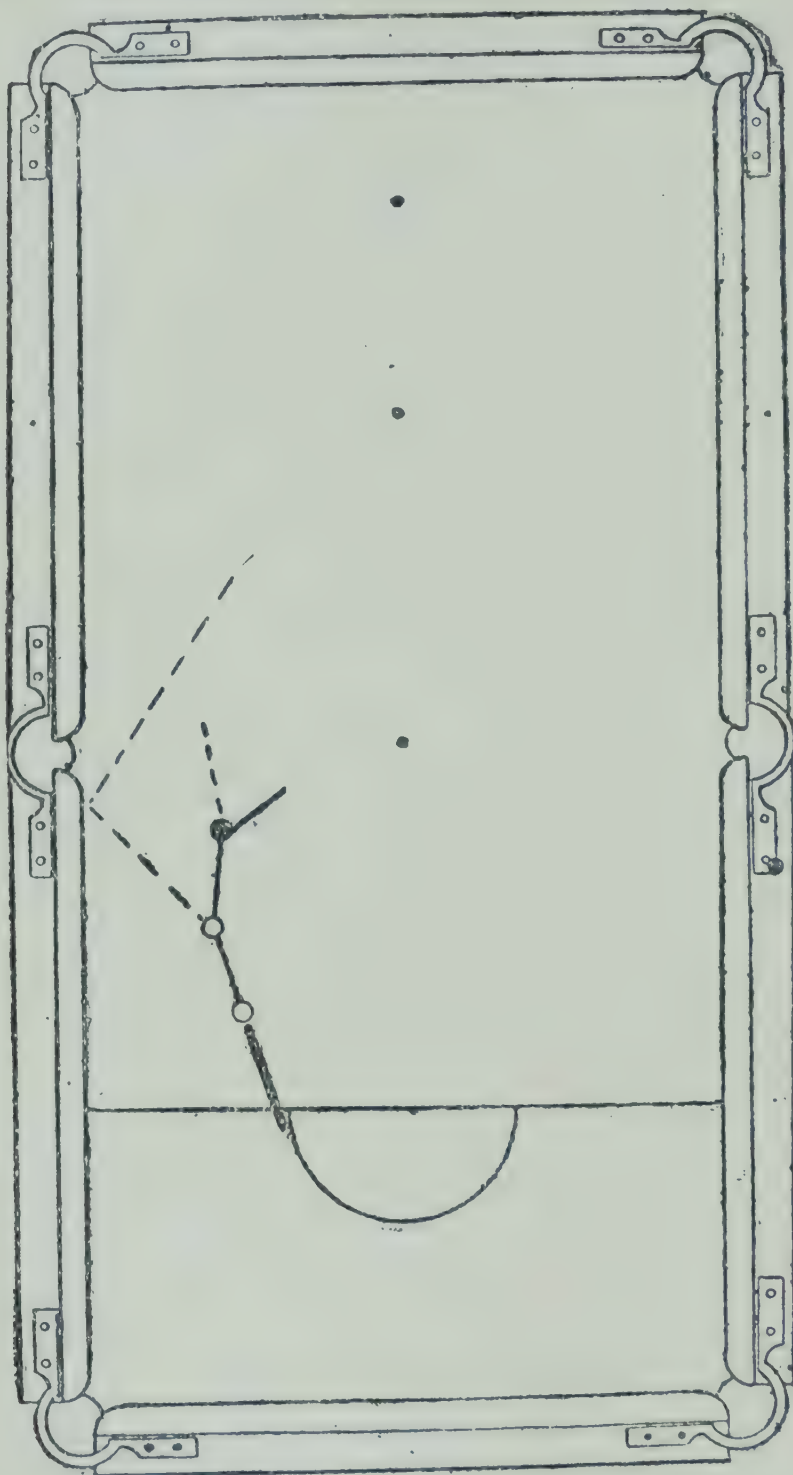


FIG. 67.—A slow run-through cannon leaving the red placed for a losing hazard.

With this "run-through" cannon comes the opportunity to work the object-balls into position for the

wished-for losing hazards. I see my way to leave the object-white up by the pyramid spot, and send the red some six inches further up the table to leave a "loser" in the left middle pocket. To effect either intention, I make about a three-quarter-ball contact with the object-white, trying to drive it on to the side cushion, a little below the middle pocket, thence to the centre of the table. It falls short of there, however, and is for the moment out of play. But having made a fairly good stroke upon the red ball (which now becomes my key-ball, the cue-ball, as I tried to direct it, fell full on the right side of it), I still command the situation. For I have the easiest of losing hazards from it into the left middle pocket.

Fig. 68 shows how I deal with the new order of things. I try to send the red ball to the vicinity of the pyramid spot, which always gives one an *entrée* to either top pocket. But my chief reason for directing it there is to place it in position for the "drop cannon" so as to bring the object-white into play again. This I try to do by taking the red about quarter-ball, cutting it down the side cushion, whence it is projected on to the top one in the direct pyramid spot line. I have, however, played the stroke too hard, and the red ball travels well beyond the pyramid spot. It is another grand example of the latitude that the player is afforded by the "losing hazard" game. Here I have miscalculated "strength" in no inconsiderable degree, yet I am still left with an ordinary stroke to follow with—the long "loser" into the left top pocket. Does not this fairly demonstrate its value?

Well, I play the long losing hazard into the left top

pocket. Plain half-ball I play it, with the same object

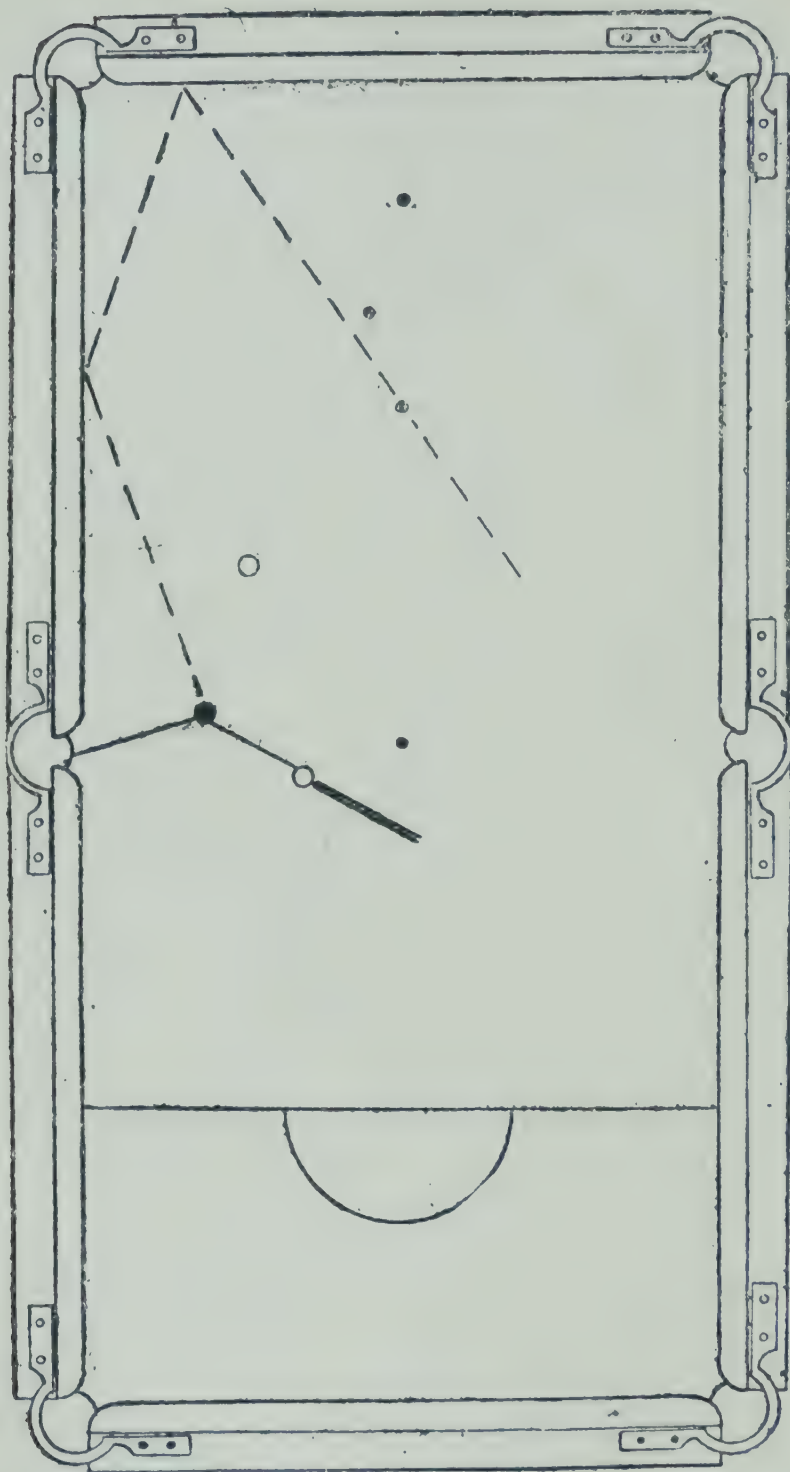


FIG. 68.—A losing hazard trying to leave the red near the pyramid spot for a "drop" cannon. Played too hard.

in view as before—the taking of the red ball to the pyramid spot. Anywhere from the top cushion to the

latter point will do, providing it is in the line of the pyramid spot. As I have pointed out, this will always leave a losing hazard into the pocket nearest the ball. I am not trying for the "loser" this time, however, my object being to leave the "drop cannon." If I miscalculate "strength" I may have to play the "loser" into the right top pocket. That is, if I under-estimate the force required, for I do not fear that I shall use too great force in the stroke. I am practically guarded against this (unless, of course, I make a ridiculously poor stroke) by the fact, as I have shown, of being in good scoring position immediately the object-ball finds the top cushion. Having thus weighed the *pros* and *cons* of the situation, I go out for the stroke—and make it. This time I bring the red almost on the pyramid spot—only, as a matter of fact, some two inches below it—and I have my "drop cannon" left me (see Fig. 69).

I negotiate it as on Fig. 70. This furnishes an illustration of how badly-judged "strength" can on occasion be of service to the player. My intention was to cut the object-white a little finer than half-ball, to take it near the billiard spot. Making a complete half-ball contact with it would have sent the object-white too near the left top pocket. To counteract the rather wider placing of the cue-ball than an ordinary ball-to-ball cannon would demand with the balls so placed, I use a little right "side." I am attempting to drop full upon the red ball to drive it gently on towards the right top pocket to somewhere about the point that the intersected line is crossed. All I have required of the red is direction more than pace, and this I can ensure better by keeping it short of the top cushion.

Well, I try to manœuvre the two object-balls into the desired positions—white near the billiard spot and red

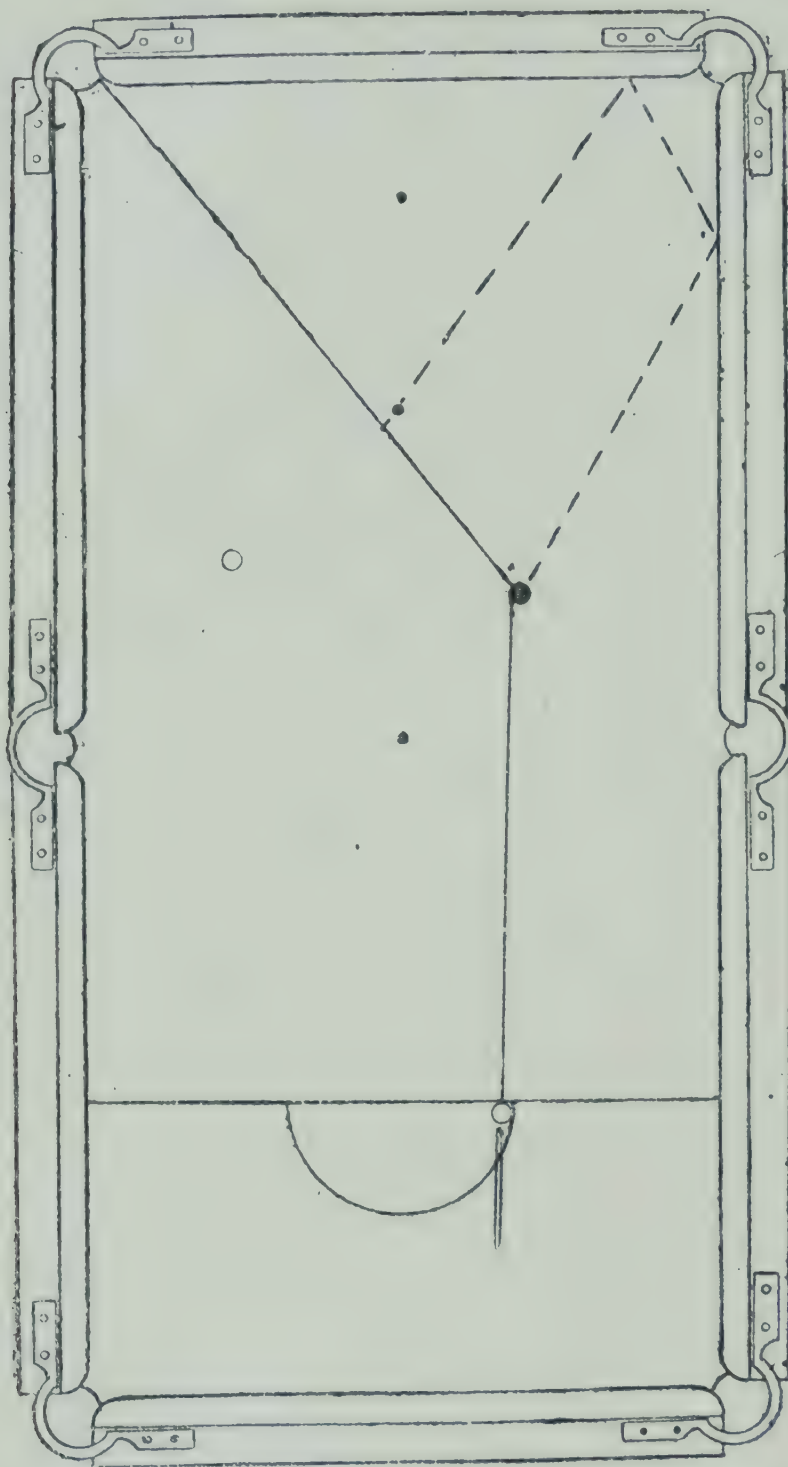


FIG. 69.—Finding the “drop” cannon position at the second attempt.

over the top pocket (not too close to it, for trying to do things to perfection begets trouble in billiards, so always

allow a margin for mistakes, which are ever prone to, and do, occur).

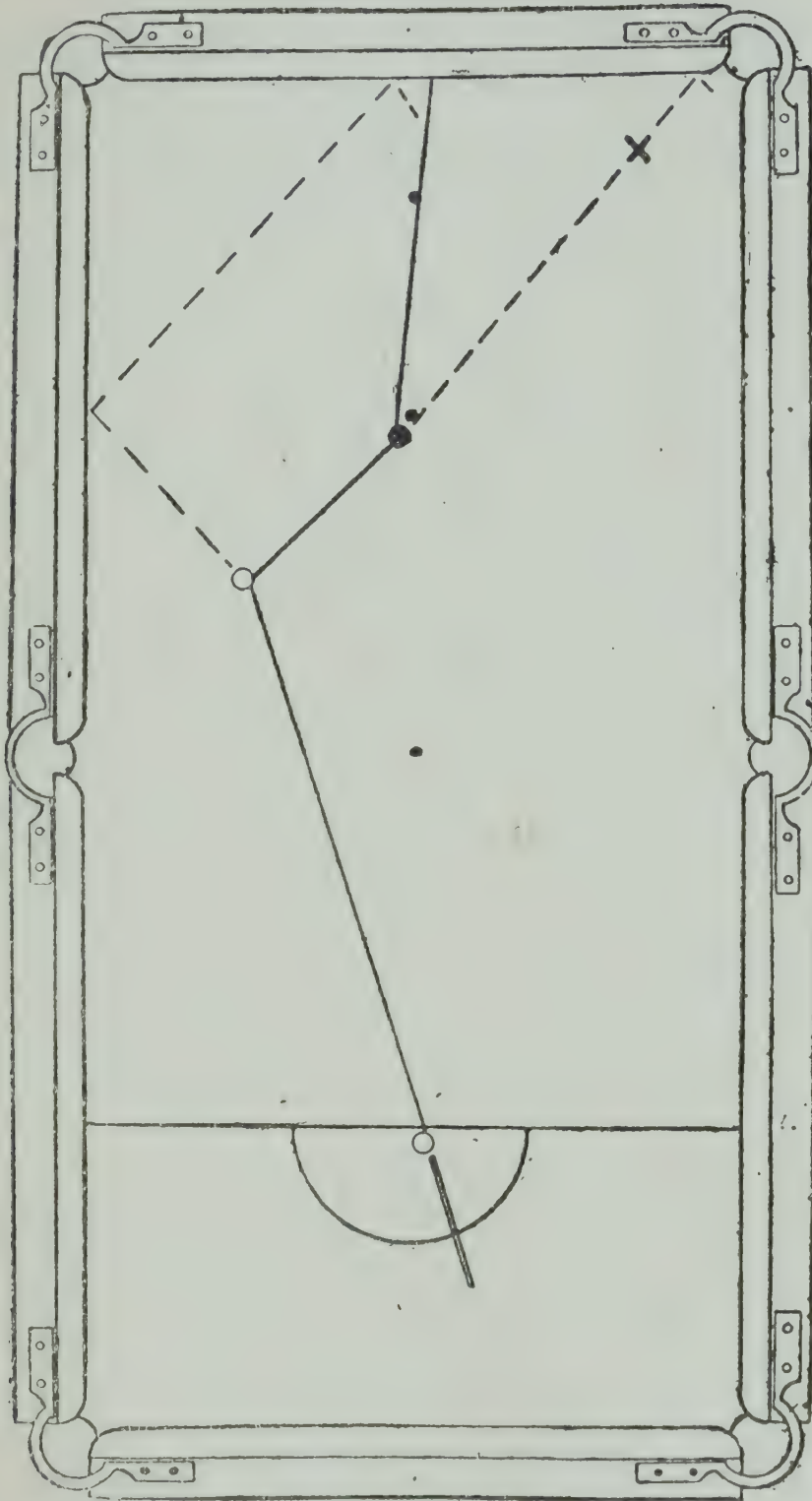


FIG. 70.—Playing the cannon leaving white near billiard spot, and red near the right top pocket.

I get nicely hold of the object-white, as I want to,

and my little bit of "side" pulls my ball over full on to the red. Without it I should only have caught it about half-ball—not what I wanted. The object-white is thrown on to the side cushion, thence to find its way near the billiard spot—in fact, between it and the top cushion. The played ball, however, falls too heavily upon the red, but as matters shape themselves, what has been a none too well judged application of "strength" yields a splendid "leave" on the top-of-the-table principle. I can deposit the coloured ball in the right top pocket, and with its relegation to its defined resting-place can follow on with an easy cannon, subject, of course, to a little thought as to how the cue-ball shall be disposed (see Fig. 71).

The most elementary rule that applies when the red ball is on the billiard spot and the two white balls in close attendance is to *keep the cue-ball below the billiard spot*. It gives you every possible advantage. To get the cue-ball above the billiard spot (that is, between this mark and the top cushion) destroys your chance of a winning hazard, and nearly always of making any use of the adjacent cushion. As in every other case, circumstances will tend to confute the rule, seldom though they may arise. When they do, little else than the bare ball-to-ball cannon will present itself to the player, unless it be the "standard" or cross-losing hazard from one side of the top cushion off the spotted red ball into the further corner pocket.

I have cursorily dealt with the elementary theory of top-of-the-table play, because as the balls have become located in my break (and, as they invariably should do, following the playing of the "drop" cannon) I am

forced to utilize them in that fashion for a few

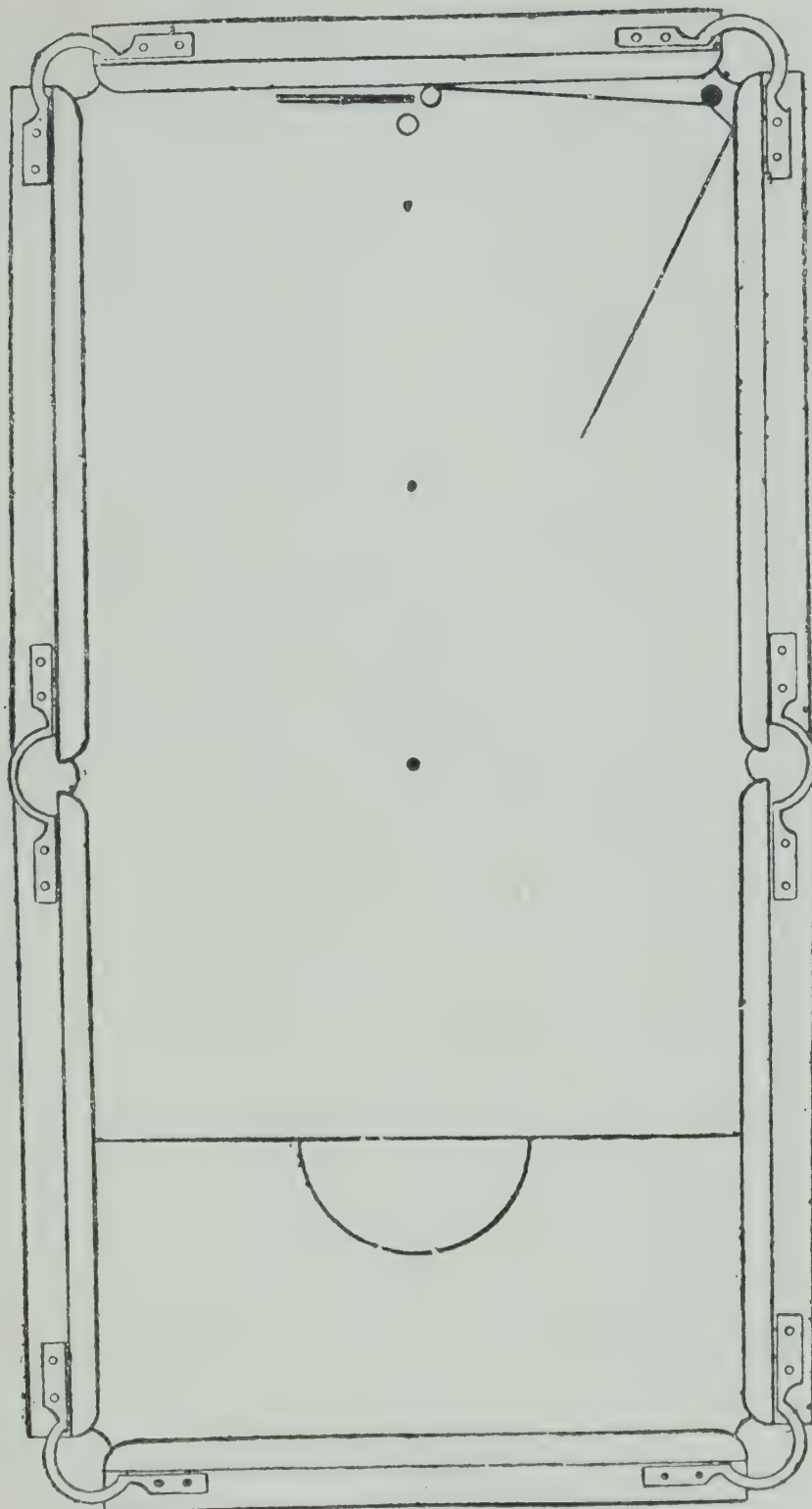


FIG. 71.—Cutting the red in to leave the top-of-the-table cannon.
Played too hard.

strokes, in the endeavour to reopen connection with my TWO losing hazards. So I go on with what is a

purely top-of-the-table-play stroke—the insertion of the red ball into the right top receptacle, and the guiding of the cue-ball below the two object ones so as to keep them in front of the player, and at the same time avoid getting them in a line. I play gently on the red, using some right “side” to prevent my ball coming too squarely off the cushion. The “side” keeps the angle of the cannon—either straightway or by the medium of the top cushion—open longer to the cue-ball than a plain-ball stroke would. The red ball drops into the pocket, and the cue-ball runs *via* the side cushion till it nearly reaches the midway line between the pyramid spot and the side cushion. Again I have not played the stroke at all well, but there is such a latitude for errors (a full foot and a half along the line that the cue-ball has run, to say nothing of the fairly wide area that is open to it) that the principle of the play has been my safeguard again. It is surprising, however, how simple a matter it is to get out of desirable position when playing such a stroke as the one on Fig. 71, and such inevitably happens by putting more pace than is necessary into the cue-ball. That great delicacy of manipulation is the chief demand for efficient top-of-the-table play, applied in the proper way, will almost go without the saying.

Despite my rather poor stroke, I still have, as I show, the cannon I was bent upon to my hand. To play it direct would require a very thin shot, with nothing to recommend it beyond the mere score. I am now in a much more complicated atmosphere of play than when manipulating losing hazards from the D, and merely controlling the running of *one* object-ball. For

now I have to see and care for the disposition of all three balls. One bad stroke (a scoring stroke, but a badly judged one) at the top of the table will make way for your opponent more quickly than half a dozen when you are playing losing hazards "from hand" or cannons in the open field of operations. What is worse still, it nearly always provides a good "leave" for the opponent. Thus it is well to exercise an ever-present caution when treading the treacherous paths that lie around and about the billiard spot. Worst of them all is the tendency that the balls ever have to run one behind the other. All well and good for the most part, if the cue-ball be the lower ball of the three. Then use can be made of the side and top cushions. But being at such close quarters, all sorts of curious and undesirable "kisses" occur among the balls in cannon play there. Even in the most accomplished hands these "coverings" of the balls cannot be avoided. Read or see for yourselves how many times such capable top-of-the-tablers as Stevenson, Dawson, and Diggle come to grief through a covering of the balls. It is the first thing they try to, and are persistently trying to, avoid, yet, try as they will with all their skill, the constantly recurring "cover" comes into being, to, as often as not, pave the way for failure. *The covering of the balls is the top-of-the-table player's bête noire.*

With my cannon, as on Fig. 71, there is no need for me to feel alarmed at any immediate prospect of a "cover" coming along to disturb the hitherto peaceful serenity of my break. I can sneak in (that is, my ball can) behind the object-white by means of the top cushion, at the same time dropping the red ball over the

left top pocket, taking care, however, to keep it away from the direct pocket line. If it goes in I may possibly get the ball covered when it comes back to be replaced upon the billiard spot. Many a thousand instances of the kind have I seen. Therefore, in this connection I advise all to *be careful of five strokes* when operating at the top of the table. Play a winning hazard or play a cannon, but beware of compound strokes there. Occasionally the billiard luminaries attune their work to such a pitch—but only occasionally. It is all too risky. So with the good old Latin inscription of *Experientia docet* as my good angel, I take the greatest care that the red ball does not go in. And it *does not*, for it strikes the side cushion some three inches below the commencement of the pocket opening, to slowly run on another four or five inches. I have “sneaked” my ball in, using left “side” as freely as I could at the gentle “strength” the stroke required. Coming away from the top cushion it cannons upon and “kicks” the object-white some four or five inches lower down the table, stopping meanwhile almost on the spot that the latter ball occupied. I have avoided the “cover;” I have another very easy winning hazard left me, with what should be, if I display any “touch” in the “winner” at all, a certain cannon with which to resume (see Fig. 72).

Mind, all the time I have my thoughts centred as much upon regaining position for my TWO losing hazards as for the other style I am perforce temporarily engaged in. I want to get away from the top of the table as soon as circumstances are propitious, but not before. I am making the one (the top-of-the-table) of the practically only two systems of break-making fit in

with the other (the losing-hazard) to reinstate me with

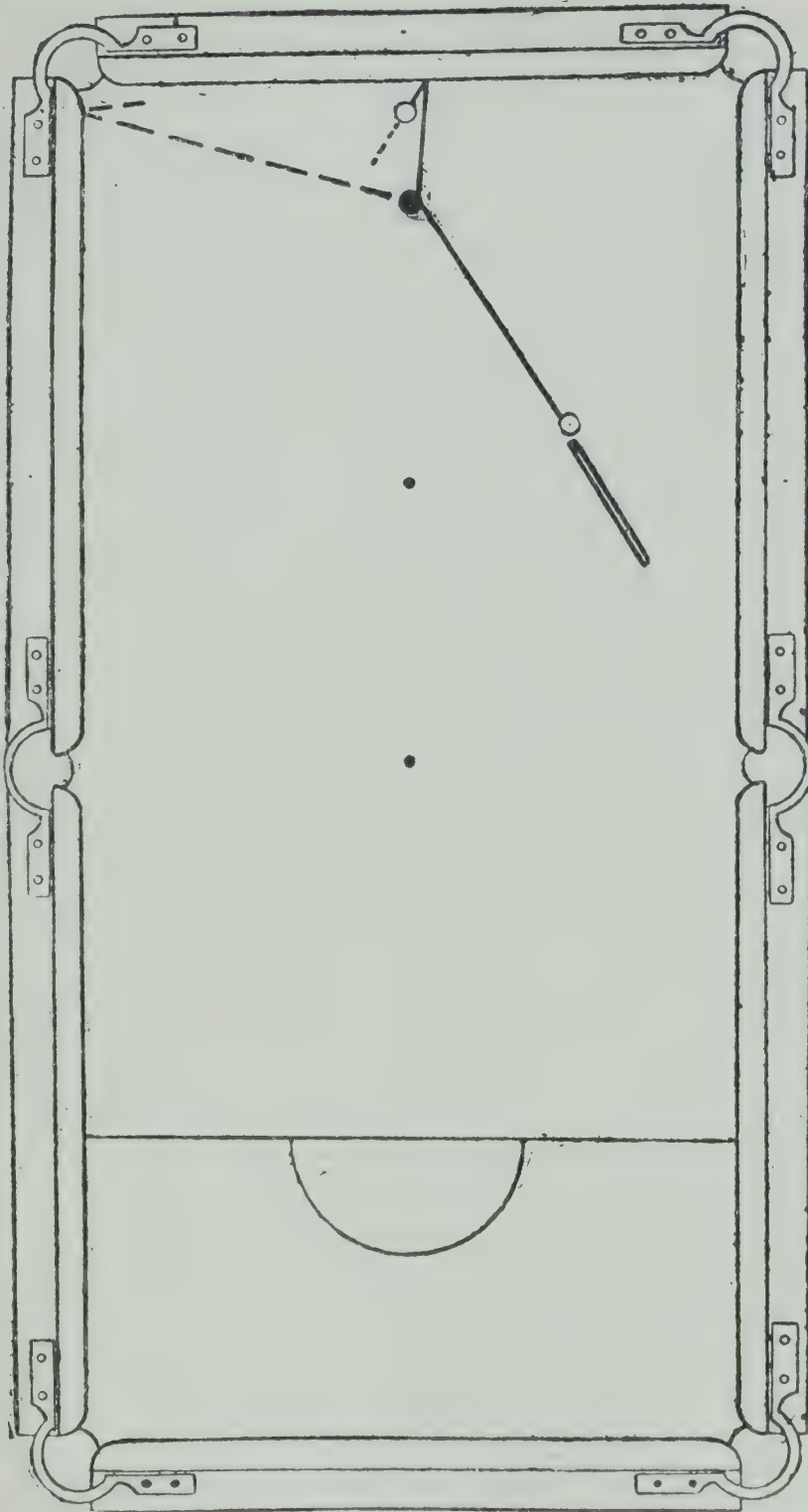


FIG. 72.—A top-of-the-table cannon leaving a red winner, and another cannon to follow on with.

my ball "in hand," and the two object-balls in the field of losing-hazard play.

I next deposit the red ball in the left top pocket, as on Fig. 73. All that I have to do in the manner of dis-

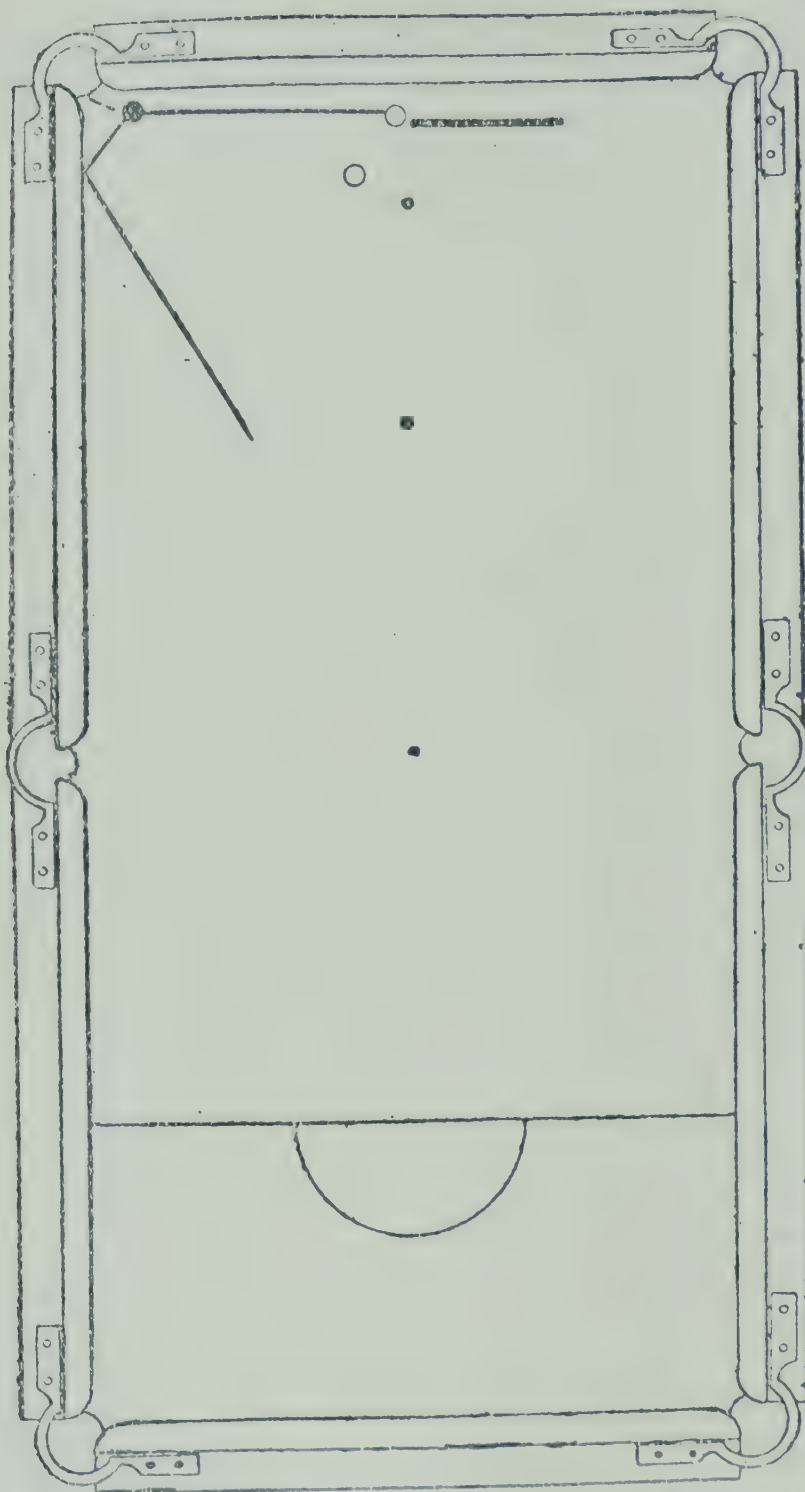


FIG. 73.—Dropping in the red to leave an easy top-of-the-table cannon.

posing of the cue-ball is to send it below the billiard spot (keeping it, of course, within comfortable distance

of the other balls) and on the same half of the table (speaking longitudinally) as the object-white ball stands. These proceedings are merely guided by an observance of the first, and the elementary, principle of the top-of-the-table game, as I have stated. To bring them about I use left "side," gently drop the red ball in the pocket, and again take up my position whence I can operate in ease and security. I might have put a little less pace into the cue-ball, but in any case I could hardly wish for a better "leave." I am still, however, a long way away from my desired losing hazards, and my prospects of a speedy return to them are not exactly brilliant.

As matters now stand, I could undoubtedly go into the right top pocket from the red. But that would only ensure one object-ball in losing-hazard position, and not the TWO that I am seeking for—to say nothing of the chance of my making a bad stroke, and even getting the red into unplayable quarters. This contingency is a somewhat remote one, I must admit; but still, if it did come to pass, I should be in an awful hole, and, after all, the best plan is the one that leaves a loophole for such things. So I settle myself down to play for a cannon—not a direct one, but from the top cushion, as it allows me to do so with a steadier and surer stroke than if played ball to ball. The latter procedure must be avoided as much as possible when it is obvious that "screw" is a necessity to the cue-ball. Only, except in extreme cases, cannon by this agency. Make "run-throughs" and "thin" and angle shots that do not ask for the application of more than ordinary force, but shun the "screw" stroke in close play—that is, if you wish to retain the balls under your control. It has the

R.B.A. B. S. II

Blore

Accession No;

U.D.C.

Date;

No:

1670
1947/MHN

5-7-81

effect of exercising a most elusive tendency towards all of the three balls. And as the ball-to-ball method holds out no hopes of my maintaining the desired control over them that is essential to my welfare, I make it by the medium of the top cushion. To do so I take the red rather finely, using left "side" to bring the cue-ball back from the cushion to the object-white. My primary object is to dribble the red over the right top pocket for a winning hazard at my next attempt, and also to retain the white object-ball close to the billiard spot, with the cue-ball enjoying an open range of attack—that is to say, avoiding the cover. I gently clip the red on its left side, sending it a little below the pocket shoulder to rebound some few inches and stop full in the direct line of entry to the receptacle. Meanwhile the cue-ball, laden with its left "side," has cannoned, and in so doing has barely disturbed the object-white, itself stopping almost on the very place which the latter sphere had occupied (see Fig. 74).

Plainly enough I must now put down the red ball again, and send my ball below the billiard spot with a view to a succeeding cannon. Applying some right "side," I try to direct it to a point about a foot short of the pyramid spot, in the line that it is bound to take after striking the cushion. The object-balls are not placed any too well, for it is evident that insufficient "strength" will lead to the object-white being masked by the red. As a matter of fact, this is the very thing that happens. I play the stroke too softly, and my ball fails to occupy the position I had chosen for it (see Fig. 75). Almost any other portion of the table below the billiard spot would have afforded me an opportunity

of getting my cannon ball to ball. But in despite of

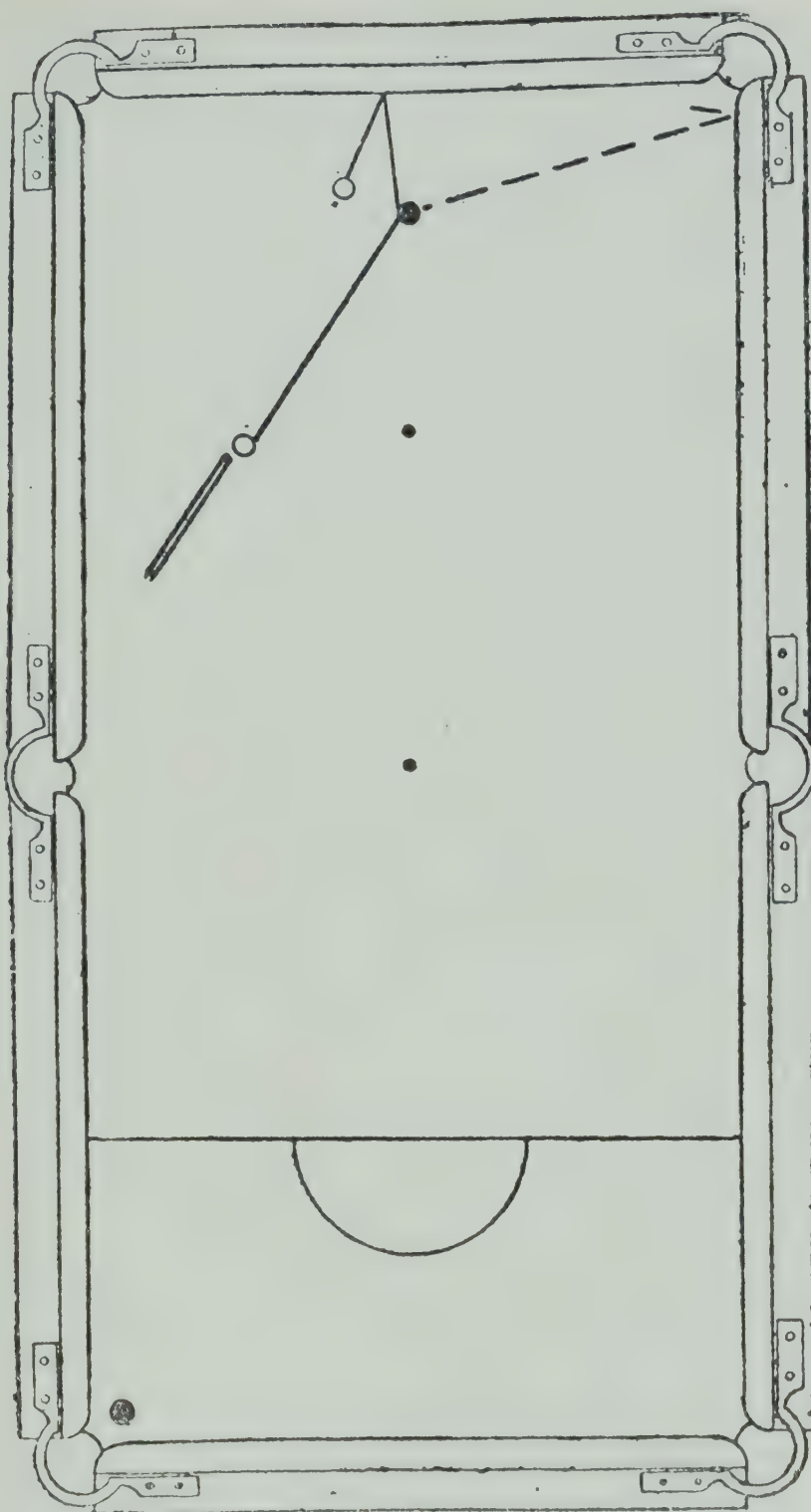


FIG. 74.—Cannon *via* the top cushion placing the red ball by the right top pocket.

my bad “strength,” the principle of the top-of-the-table game (the sending of the cue-ball below the billiard

spot, with its range of action bounded by a line drawn

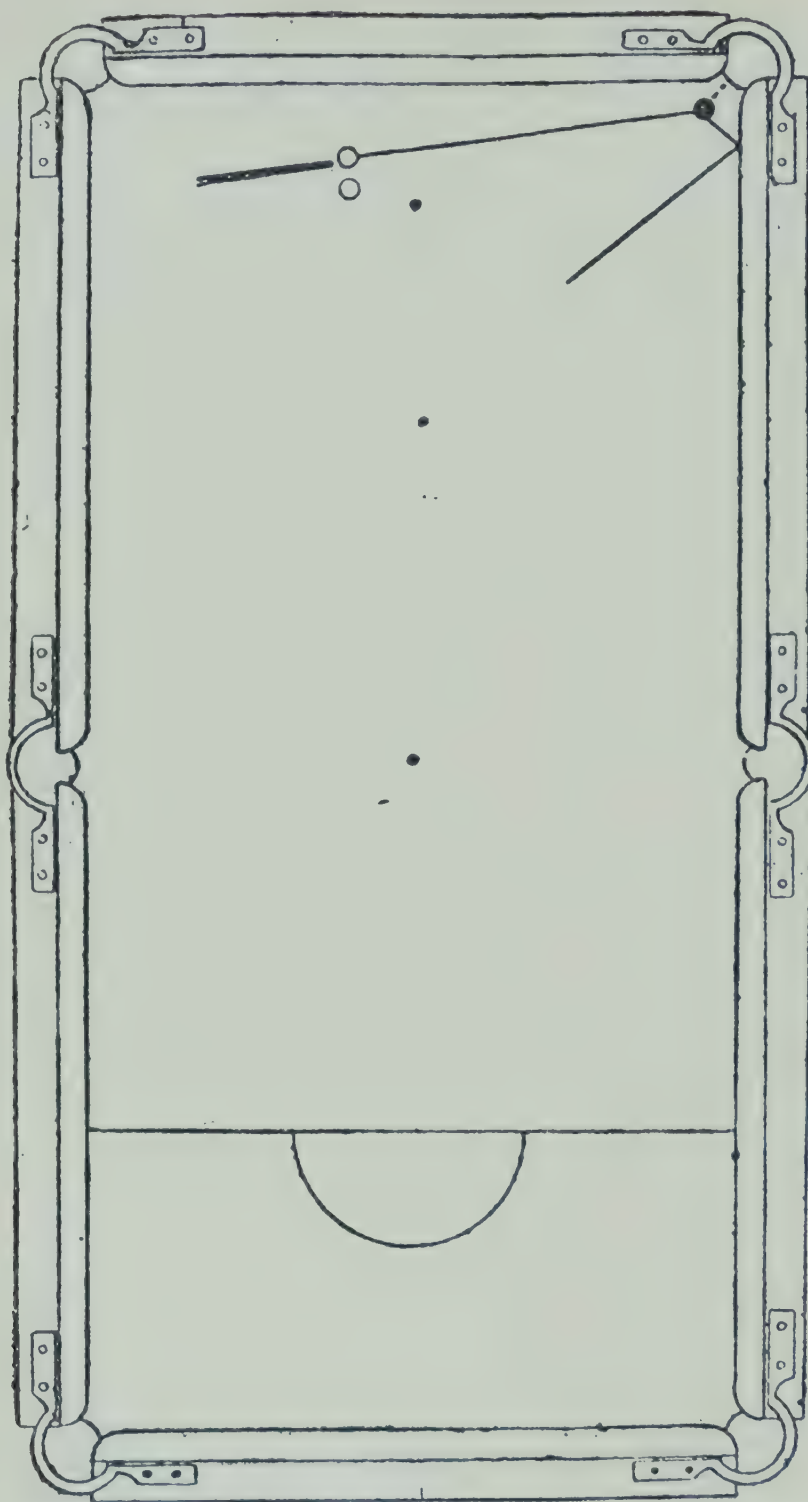


FIG. 75.—Inserting the red, trying to get the cue-ball placed for a ball-to-ball cannon.

across the table through the pyramid spot) is my

salvation. It enables me to derive the advantages attendant upon the use of the top cushion.

The character of the shot which I shall now have to play differs materially from the two previous cannons that I made when the red ball was spotted. In both of these I had an open pathway to the top pocket that faced me, allowing me the option of either dropping the red over it or depositing it in there straight away. Now, however, the line to the pocket in front of me is closed by the presence of the object-white behind the coloured ball. No matter how I try to find out some stroke that will lead to a connection with one or other of the top pockets at my next shot, it does not present itself to me. All that I see is a cannon by means of the top cushion, with another one to follow.

I am now for the first time in danger of getting the balls out of my grasp. These cannons, as I have pointed out, when played within the circumscribed space at the head of the table, unless treated with the utmost care, are apt to break up the sequence of easy shots in a remarkably rapid and unpleasant manner. The more especially as, by the nature of the stroke I am compelled to play, I take the balls down the table into the open field of operations. I have little or nothing to hope for from any cushion work. Everything will depend upon the way I gain contact with the object-balls. At the same time, I see a decided prospect of getting in the path of my TWO losing hazards, if I deal anything like well with the cannon.

So I play the stroke according to the second principle of the losing-hazard break which I have explained. This took the form of counselling the leaving

of the object-balls close together, providing that the cue-

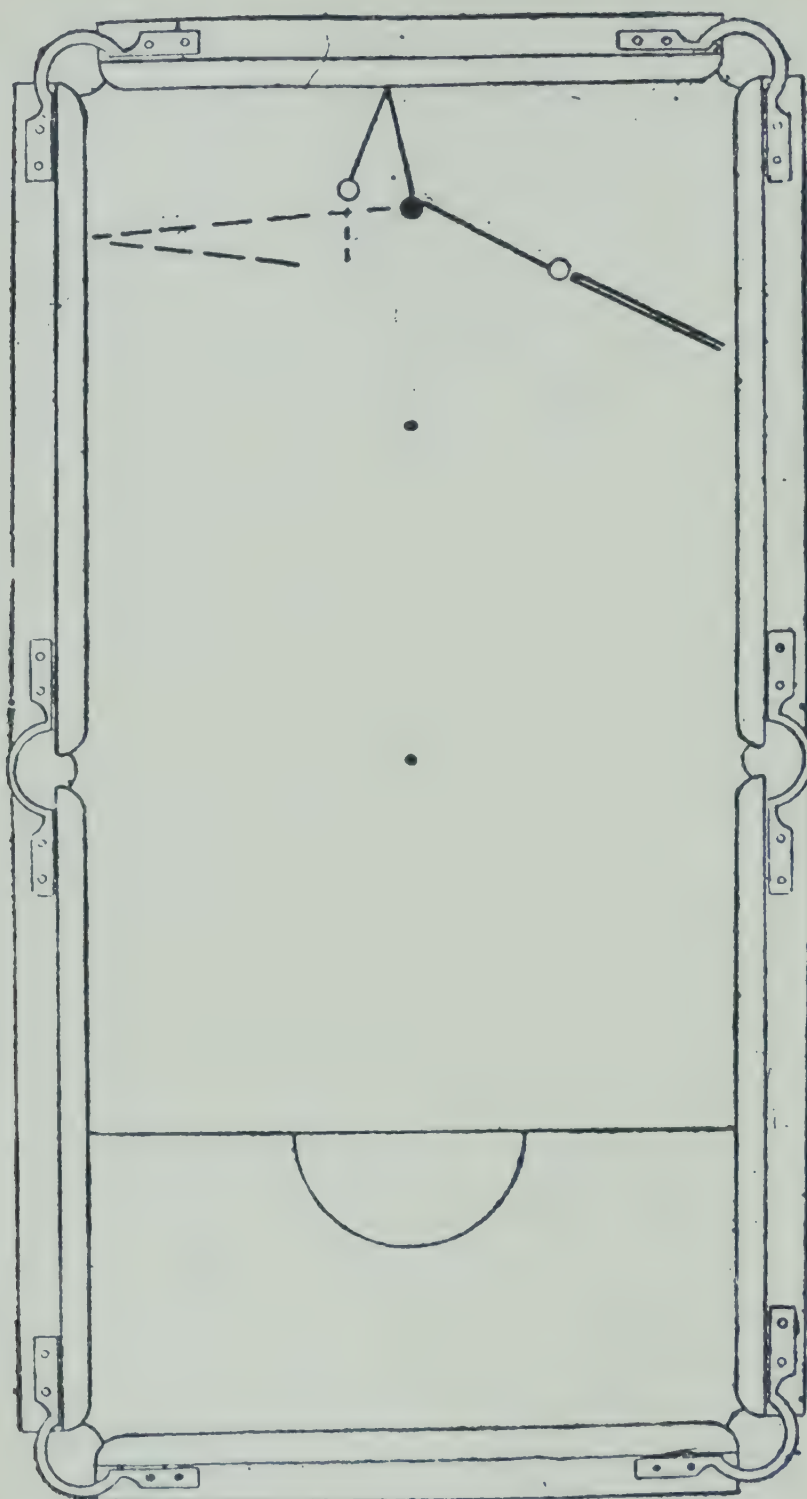


FIG. 76.—A cushion cannon sending the balls away into mid-field.

ball is also with them. I play it with a certain amount of right "side," the angle from the top cushion demanding

it. I cut the red past the object-white on to the side cushion, with the idea of causing it to return near to the latter, but not beyond it. The object-white I endeavour to send a little further down the table, by which proceeding I hope to locate it so that I get it placed for losing-hazard work from the baulk half-circle. Well, I make the cannon, and, what is more, I make it well. I leave both object-balls nicely in front of me (see Fig. 76). This, of course, I was bound to do if I gauged the meeting of the two white balls at all well. They met as I intended them to do—almost centrally. It assured me of one thing, and that was the fact that the object-balls must lie in front of the cue-ball. One danger is avoided. The other (the dreaded covering of the balls) also fails to put in an appearance, and the easiest of cannons is before me.

On Fig. 77 may be seen the gentle cannon which I make the medium of removing the object-white-ball from the top of the table for the first time since I played the "drop" cannon. I do not do so, of course, unless I foresee that it is advantageous to my game. But the stroke that I have to play ensures that it shall be driven to the central line of the table, while I practically hold the red for a winning hazard into the left top pocket. To bring both these things about I operate with a plain ball three-quarter full upon the object-white at gentle strength. The thick contact takes nearly all the run that it has possessed out of the cue-ball, and it falls dully upon the left side of the coloured ball. The latter is directed an inch or two nearer the pocket, the cue-ball drops about three inches down the table, and the object-white seeks temporary position

near the middle spot. And I have a simple straight-away winning hazard into the left top pocket.

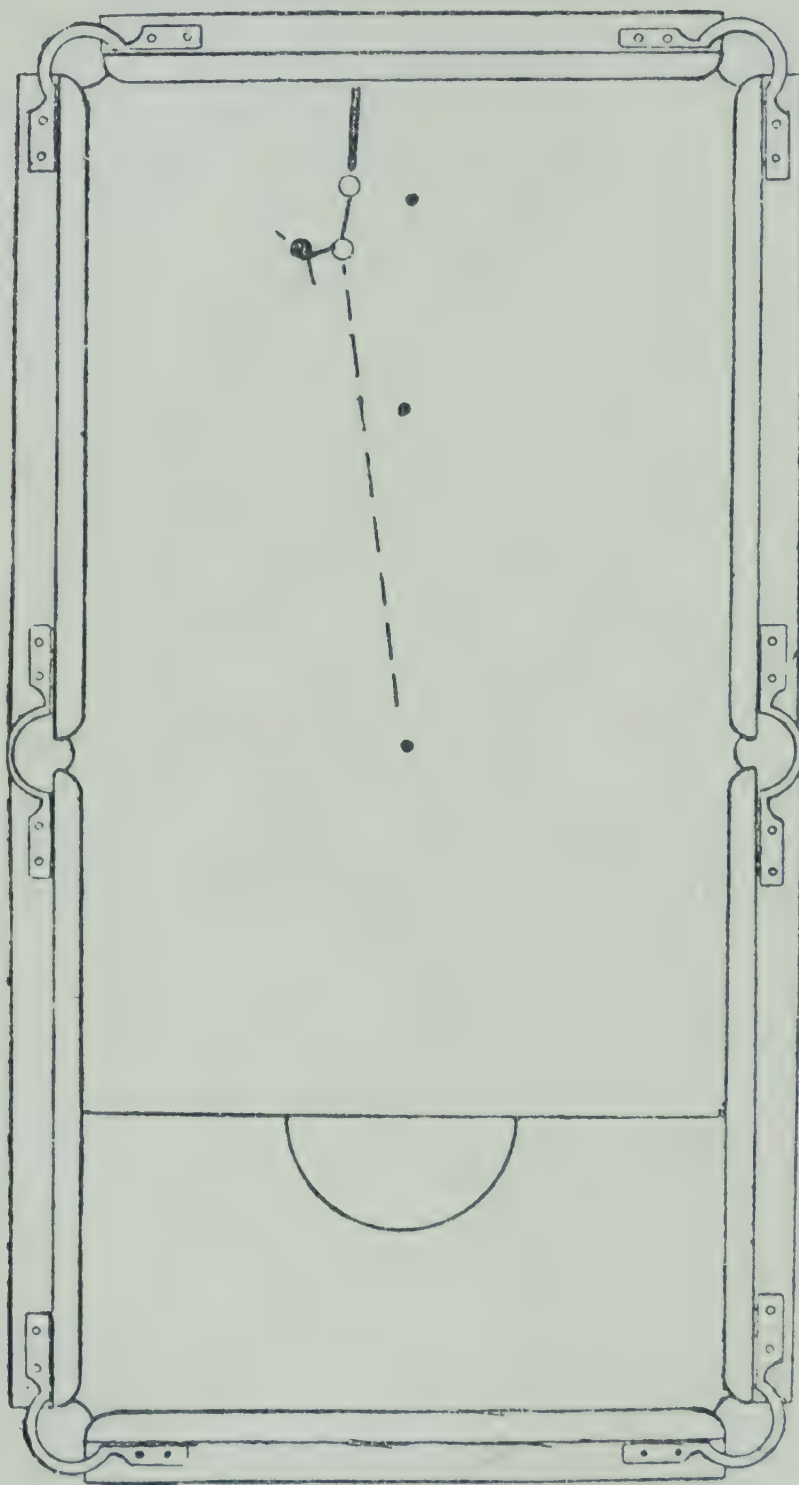


FIG. 77.—A cannon, driving the white to the middle of the table, and getting behind the red for left top-pocket play.

On Fig. 78 will be seen how I insert the red ball

with a "stab" shot for the purpose of leaving myself

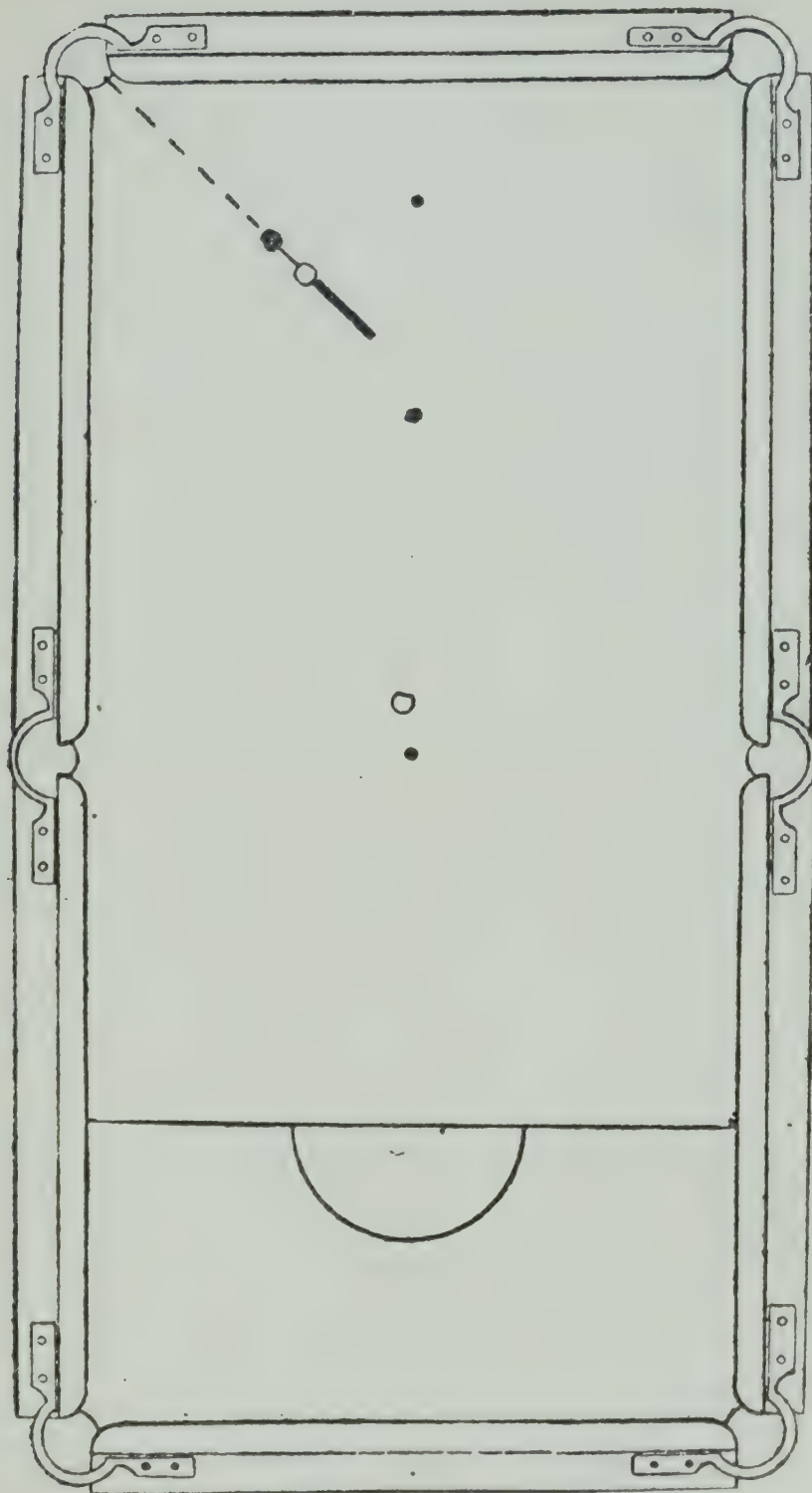


FIG. 78.—Putting down the red, leaving the cue-ball in position for a spot hazard.

a spot hazard. If I could have put myself in the way of obtaining a losing hazard, I should have undoubtedly

preferred it. But there is danger attending on a following up of the red ball to try and gain position for the "cross-loser" (that is, the stroke made from the red ball when it is spotted, with the cue-ball lying handily to a top pocket, and presenting a half-ball angle from the red into the further top pocket). One is always apt to make a mistake in these strokes when attempting to gain the desired position from any distance. The more so, too, when there is a direct run on to the pocket "shoulders," as in the case under notice. I find that, unless one is very adjacent to the played object-ball, it is infinitely better to work up to the spot hazard, as I now do. I "stab" the red (I must explain that I mean by stabbing the red ball, to make my ball stop dead as it strikes the red—a shot that I dilated upon in an earlier lesson).

Well, I "stab" the red ball and deposit it in the left top pocket, as I intended to, leaving the cue-ball slightly out of the direct line behind the red and the right top pocket. Now, at last, I am in the way again of my two losing hazards.

Fig. 79 shows the red again pocketed, and how the cue-ball is directed on to the top cushion, with the idea of leaving the "cross-loser," of which I spoke. Just a nice steady stroke (the "strength" comes handily to one by practice of the shot), in which a little of reverse or left "side" will be found a useful factor in keeping the cue-ball in the angle line. This latter, by the way, can be gauged by drawing a line from the top cushion "shoulder" of the top pockets on to the billiard spot. It is such a valuable stroke, that I counsel more than passing notice to be taken of these "cross" losing

hazards ; for, like the angle "loser," that may be

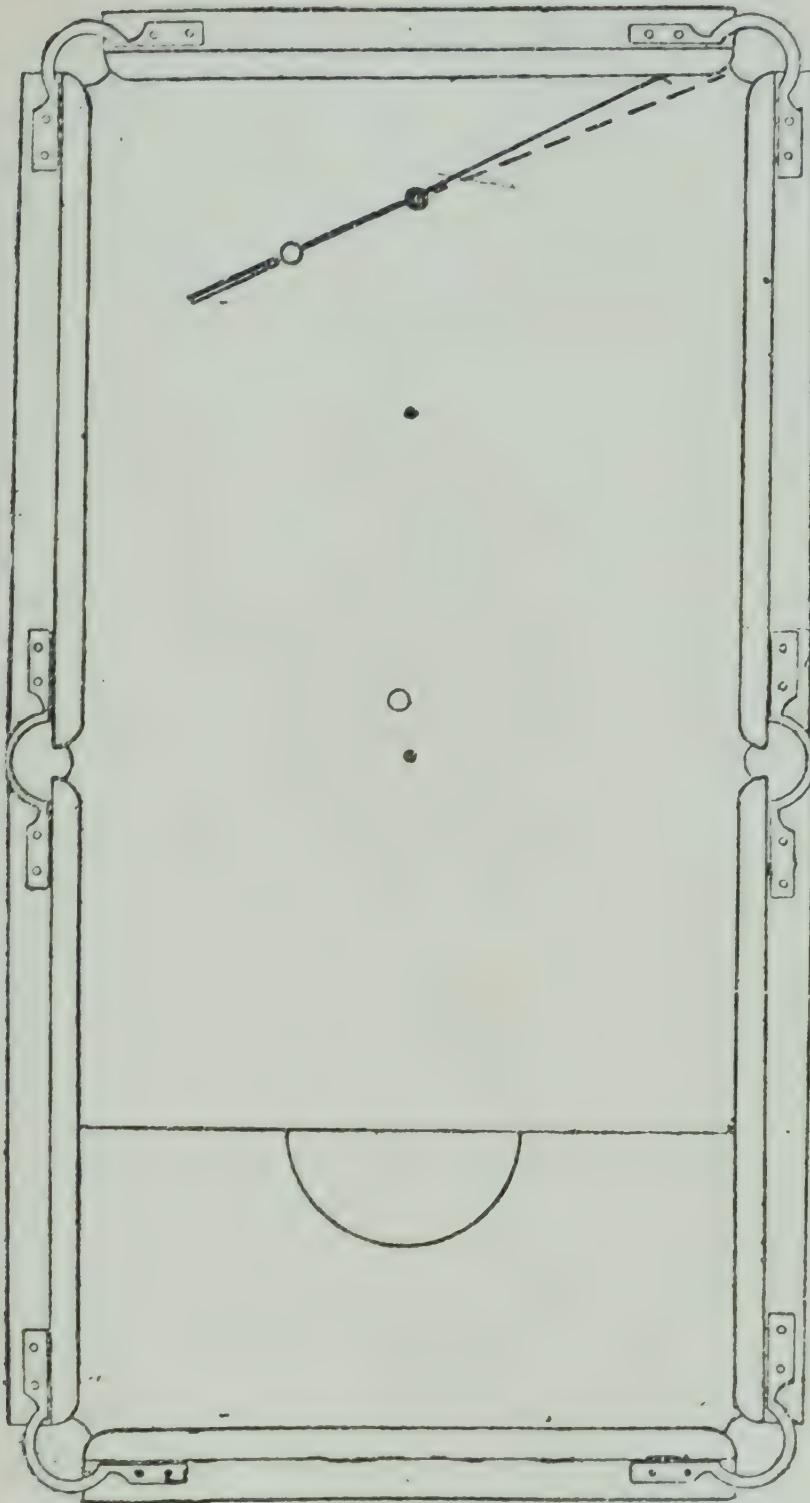


FIG. 79.—Putting down the red, and following on with the cue-ball to leave the "cross-loser" in the opposite corner pocket.

gained from the line of the upper "shoulder" of the middle pockets on to the billiard-spot, the "cross-

loser" is one of the mainstays of the losing-hazard game.

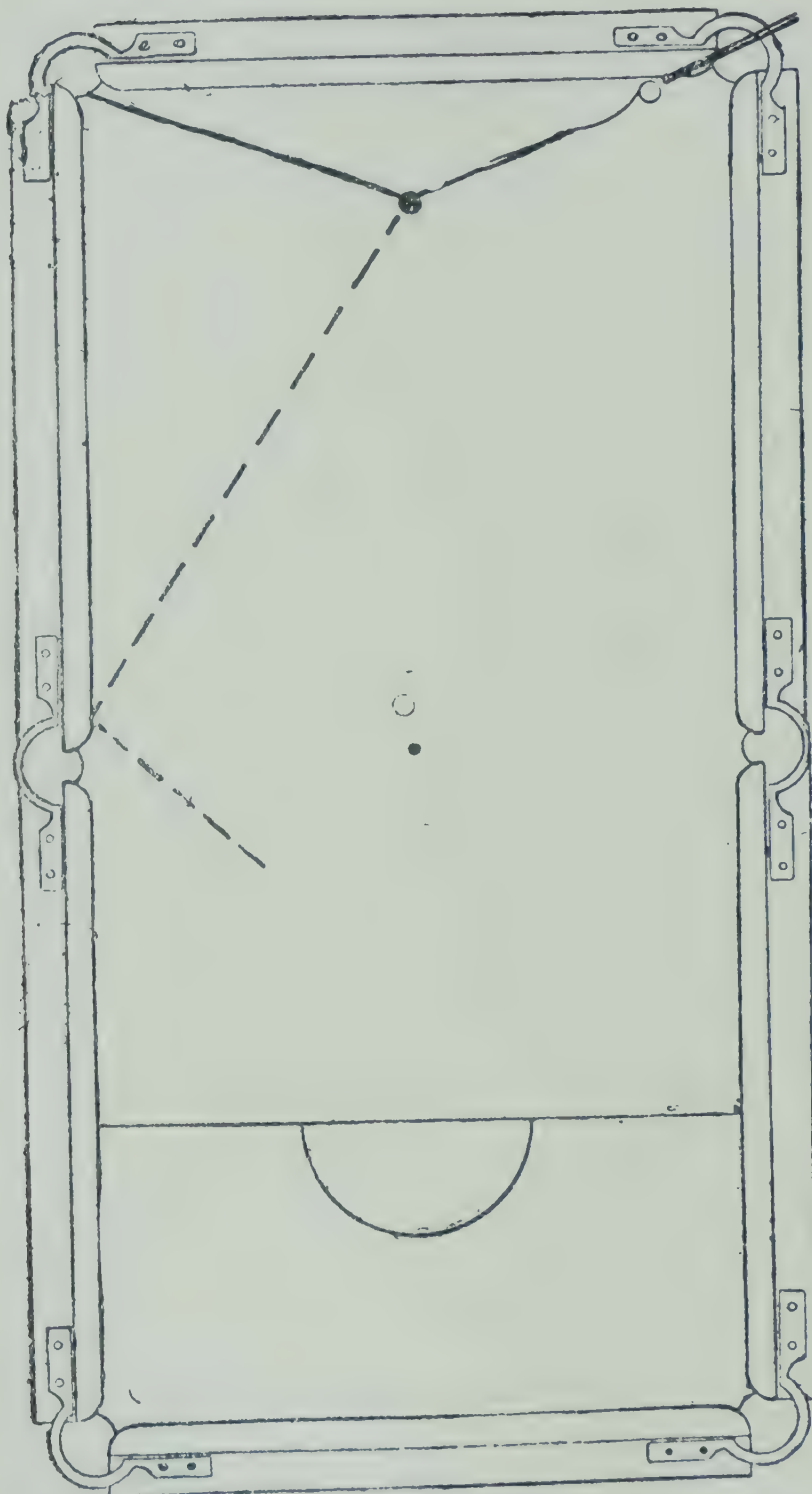


FIG. 80.—A "swerving" ball "cross-loser" regaining position for the losing-hazard "break."

By a glance at Fig. 79, it may be noted that I have

not exactly acquired the proper "cross" losing-hazard angle, for the cue-ball has stopped too near the top cushion. I am so little out of the line, however, that by the use of some right "side" I can counteract my deficiency of good position. I commented upon the effect that the application of "side" has upon a ball lying under or very close to a cushion. It causes a swerving of the cue-ball, which demands an allowing for in the taking of one's aim. This swerving is shown on the figure by the curve extending from the cue-ball for about a third of the distance on its journey to the red. A medium-pace stroke, and the red will take up its defined place (at this and every form of the "cross" losing hazard) over the middle pocket towards which it is driven. This is one of the beauties of the "cross-loser"—it is bound to leave a subsequent middle pocket, or, at the worst, a winning hazard. As I have played it I leave an ordinary "loser" (see Fig. 80).

Fig. 81 explains my idea of dealing with the losing hazard, and also the very bad stroke that I made. I tried a half-run-through stroke on the red, intending to send it up to the top cushion and on the other side of the object-white as it returned, to follow on with a "loser" into the right middle pocket. However, I made too thin a contact with the red, and, instead of seeing it come back as I had intended, it runs on past the middle pocket to finally take up a position below that mark, almost tight against the cushion. Now, with my red ball well out of play, I turn perforce to the object-white to get it into play again. So I go for the long losing hazard into the left top pocket, to try and bring the object-white down to the vicinity of the imprisoned red

ball. I attempt to catch the object-white half-ball, but

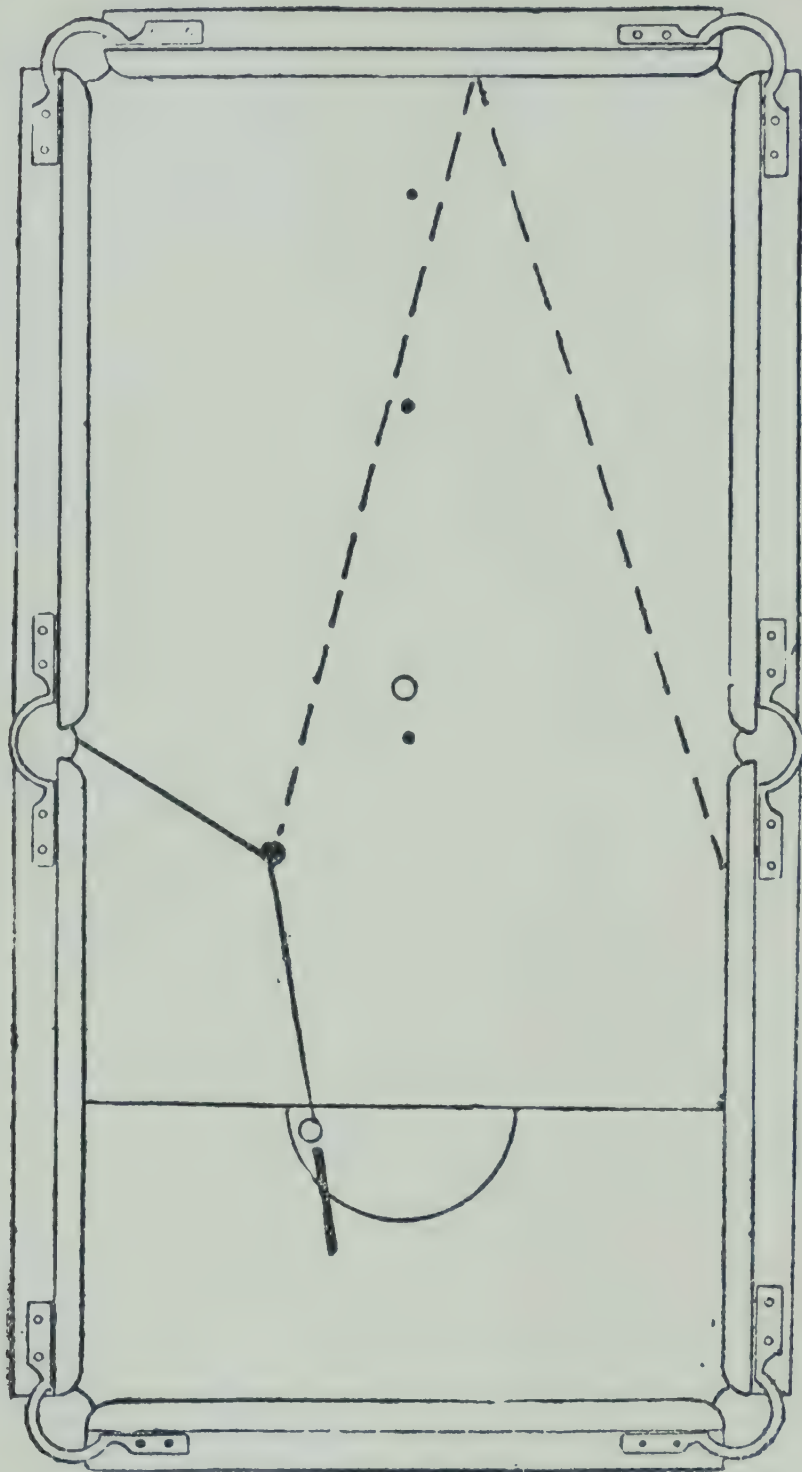


FIG. 81.—A badly played "loser," the red ball being sent much too far over to the right side of the table ; and it takes up unplayable quarters.

this time, and for the first time since the break started, I make two bad strokes in succession, as I hit the

object-ball much too full, and though I bring off the

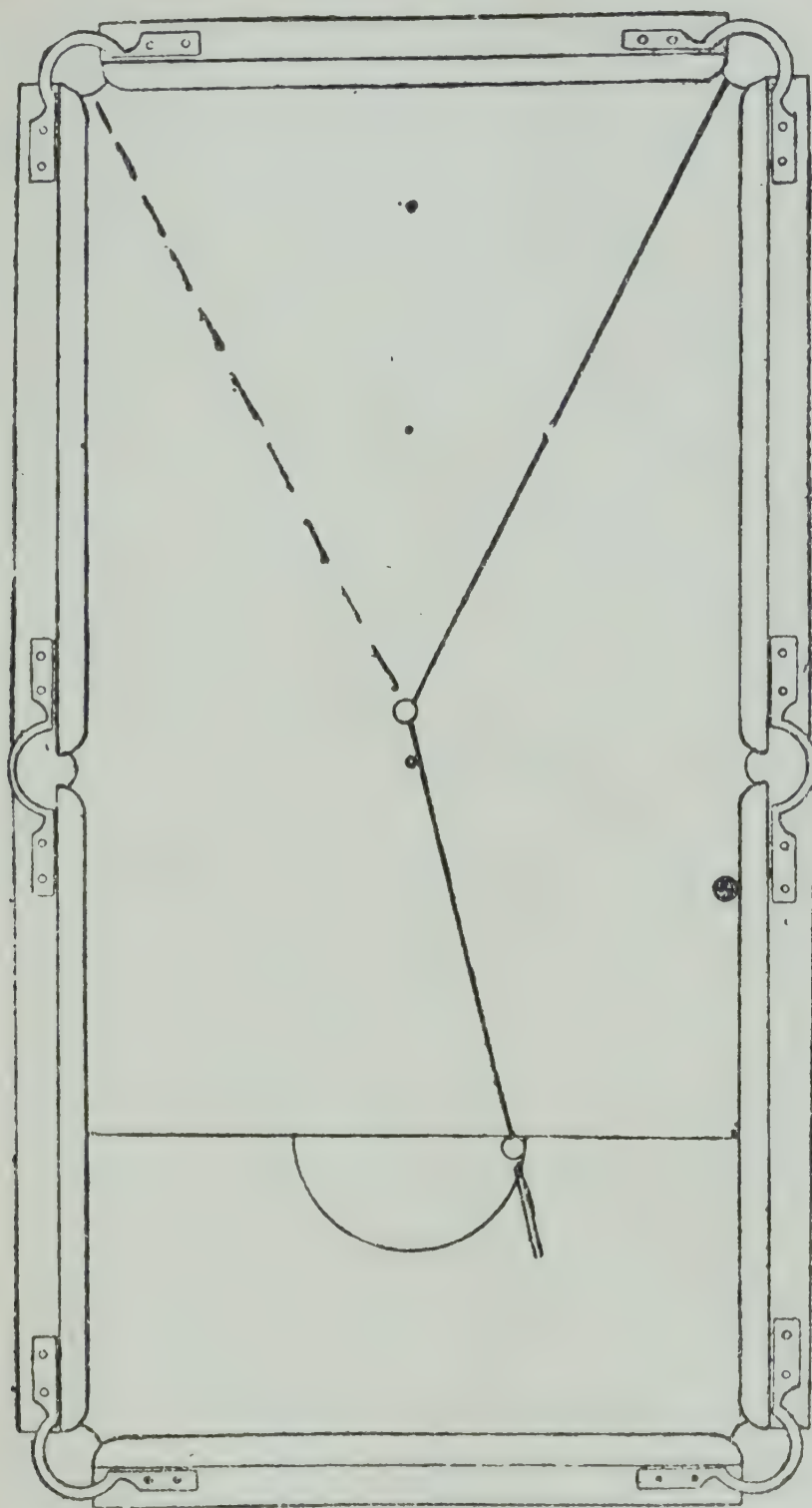


FIG. 82.—Trying to get the object-white down by the red, a four-shot (each white ball finds a top pocket) practically ends the "break."

losing hazard the object-white disappears from view by dropping into the left top pocket—a four-shot (see

Fig. 82), I am thus left with only the red ball to operate upon, and no prospect of a score. So I fall back upon

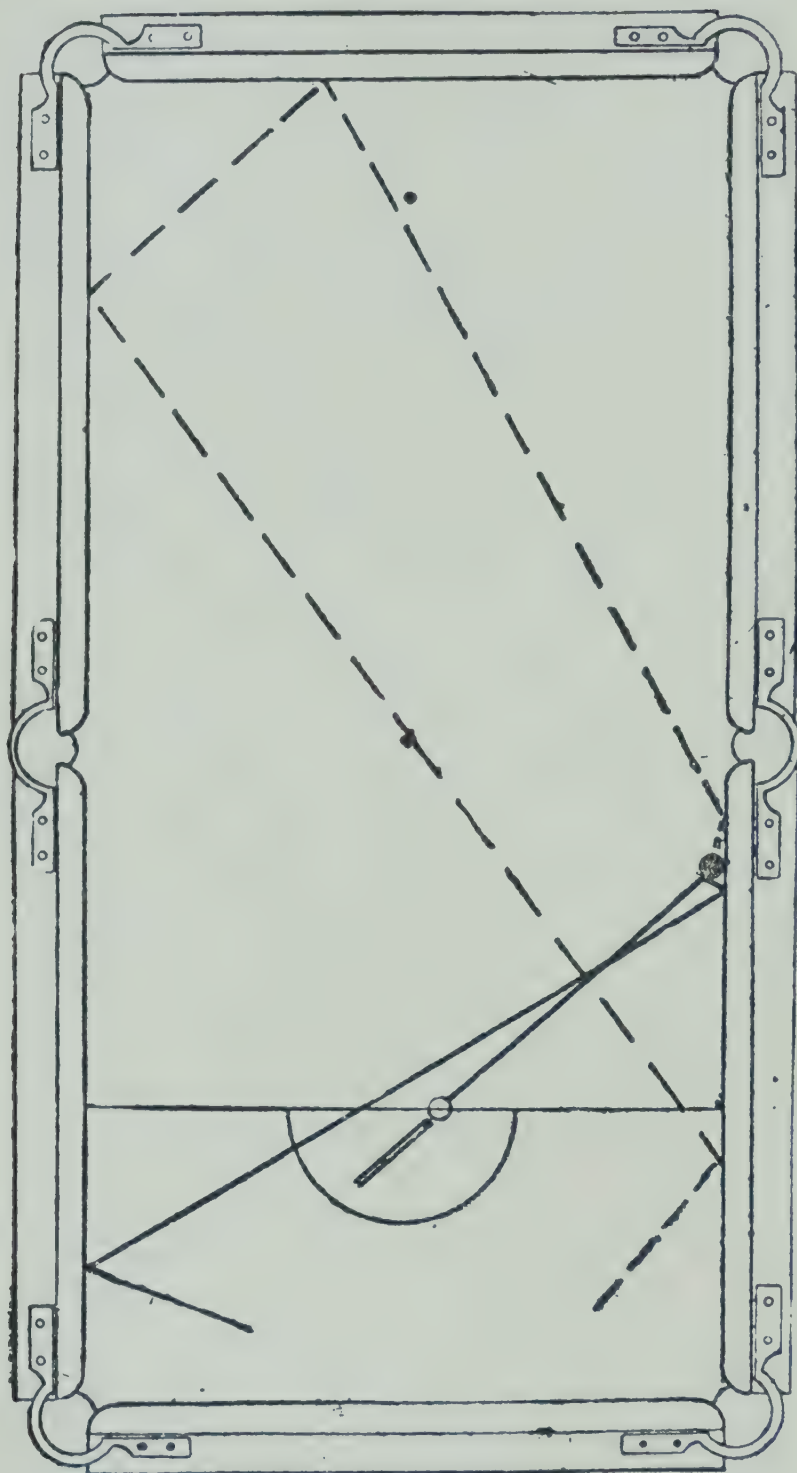


FIG. 83.—Winding-up—a useful double-baulk.

the old-time tactics of leaving a double-baulk, and thus end a break which has fairly clearly enunciated one

phase of the losing-hazard game. This double baulk I accomplish by means of right "side" and "screw." Using plenty of force the cue-ball is pulled back into baulk, into which sphere the red comes after travelling around the board in the way that the figure (83) illustrates.

CHAPTER V

*CONTROLLING THE RED BALL IN LOSING-
HAZARD PLAY*

AS most may have discovered by a study of my “losing-hazard break” system, the chief point in it is the controlling or directing to desired points of the red ball—the scoring-ball. “Strength” is mainly subservient to direction in the manipulation of the red ball from the baulk half circle. There is not that nicety of judgment and “touch” required as in cannon play of a close nature, an attempt to deposit a ball or balls within the radius of a very few inches, or an endeavour to “bring the balls together” for an ensuing cannon. Thus it is infinitely more easy of execution, this losing-hazard play from the coloured ball, than any other form of billiards, and that is my reason for urging its good points, apart from its remunerativeness. For every red losing-hazard provides the maximum single-stroke score—three points.

How the object-white ball aided the prolongation of the player’s attack upon the chief objective—the red ball—by being made the medium of a cannon whenever the losing hazard was lost, I have tried to show in the losing-hazard break. I pointed out, too, instances

when, with the object-white ball off the table, behind baulk, or lying in some unplayable position, manipulation of losing hazards from the red ball would have been pursued with greater freedom. Sometimes the object-white will block the passage to a pocket, or it will be so located that it will interfere with the running of the red ball. Then, to the methodical player, the man who is trying to make the best use of every stroke towards keeping as long a tenure of the table, and the building up of as large a break as possible (this is the outline of professional play), there is only one course open. The object-white has to be removed to a convenient spot whence it may help to neutralize the effect of an inaccurate stroke upon the scoring ball. Of such a complication (the object-white in the desired groove of the red ball's movements) I give an example on Fig. 84.

Here we find the scoring-ball affording the simplest of losing hazards into a middle pocket. But the presence of the object-white ball in the central line of the table (the natural path of the red) prevents such a stroke being played. And, as I have said before, the true losing-hazard game is to derive all possible benefit from the four upper pockets. The only means should be obvious, that is to make the played object-ball traverse the centre of the table. No use to try difficult position strokes, such as the losing hazard in the left middle pocket. The actual hazard is, of course, of the simplest kind. But the guiding of the red to favourable quarters is another matter altogether. To attempt it with its only prescribed path (down the central line of the table on its return from the top cushion) barred is to deliberately forsake the first essential of losing-hazard play—

the making use of the four upper pockets. From all

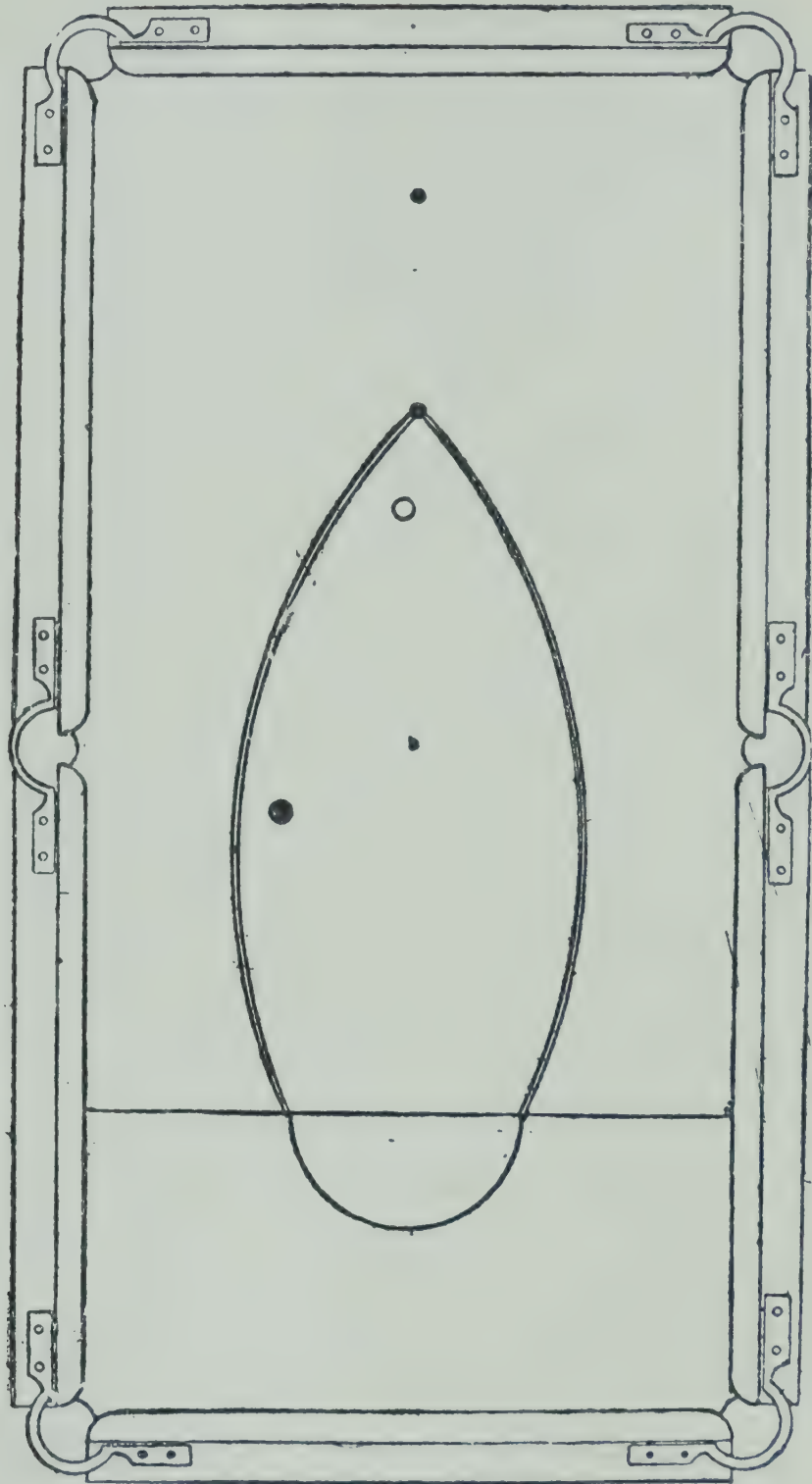


FIG. 84.—Losing-hazard “break,” showing the object-white making the movement of the red ball in the centre of the table. In this case a top-pocket “loser” off the white, to clear the way, is “the game.”

points of view there is only one stroke to play with

such a placing of the balls as Fig. 84 shows, the losing hazard from the object-white. Neither the easy cannon nor the red losing hazard will maintain the simplicity of position which is the greatest merit of "losing-hazard break." With a stroke that a mere novice should make, connection with the *two* losing hazards is again made, and the object-balls are left over either middle pocket.

I put forward Fig. 85 to show the enormous advantage of having the object-white on the table, as compared with the discomforts experienced by its location on Fig. 84. Now, it hardly needs the telling that a prompt recourse to the red ball may be had, for the object-white in no wise interferes with its mapped-out sphere of operations. These are bounded by the boat-shaped lines which extend from the extremities of the baulk half-circle on Figs. 84 and 85. Placed as the object-white is on Fig. 85, it should be of the greatest possible assistance to the player, as it guarantees him an easy shot if he fails to bring the red into scoring position. It may well be said of the object-white here that it is the player's reserve force.

Having thus treated of the merits and demerits attendant upon the presence of the object-white ball on the table in losing-hazard play, I turn to the control of the red ball simply and solely. To heighten the effect, I take the object-white from the board. Often enough we have seen the great professional players make larger breaks with only the red ball to work upon than they ordinarily do when they have the two object-balls nicely under their control. Frequently the sporting papers have declared that "Inman is never happy until the object-white is off the table." So it would, indeed,

seem to the casual observer, judging by the generally

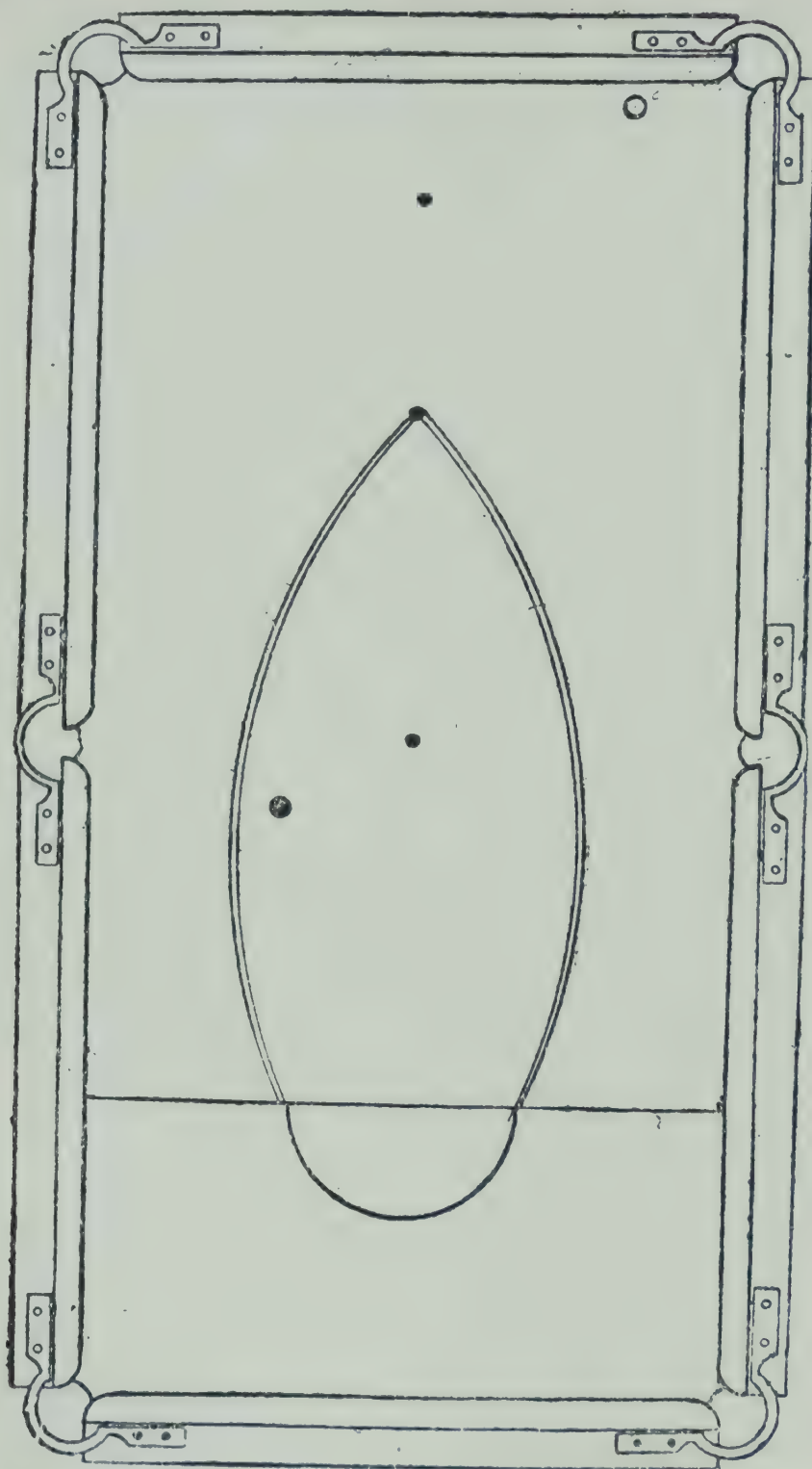


FIG. 85.—A position showing the advantage of having the object-white on the table as opposed to Fig. 84. Here the red ball may be utilized for losing-hazard work with the white lying handily in reserve by the right top pocket.

increased rate that comes to this young player's scoring

when this happens. And another thing may be made mention of—the fact that all the big breaks have been scored from the red ball when the object-white has been off the table or behind the baulk line. The object-white, when anywhere in the field of losing hazard operations, is bound sooner or later to disturb the sequence of the play from the red ball. Where I placed it at the commencement of the losing-hazard break (see Fig. 31) it was less in the way than anywhere else, whilst at the same time performing its accepted office, that of lying handily for a score should the red run into unplayable localities. Really the question as to whether it is better to have or not to have the object-white on the table in playable position when the red is nicely placed for losing hazards, is not too easy to answer. Still, do not for a moment think that I wish to counsel a “putting down the white” policy. Its many drawbacks should be made manifest to those who took stock of the part the object-white played in the course of the losing-hazard break—how it helped the red out of various entanglements, and that it was not until the object-white had disappeared from the table, despite the many badly-judged strokes I made, that I was perforce compelled to finish the break. Yet it would almost seem, judging by what they have accomplished on occasions with only the red ball to attack, that the foremost players might well hesitate ere they expressed an opinion as to which course would pay them the better. In saying so much I am, it must be noted, writing only of men who will rarely make an error in striking the object-ball, that is, striking it sufficiently truly to give it the desired direction. One may not do this and yet score, a fact I have

had proven to me on countless occasions. And as the advanced amateur is ever prone to get the object-ball out of the field of play although he scores, there is an undoubted argument in favour of his having both object-balls upon the table to fit in with the changing phases of his treatment of "the losing-hazard break." For the matter of that, my memory fails to recall to me any instance of a professional player depositing the object-white in a pocket (unless circumstances precluded him doing anything else) for the purpose of making play upon the red. It was the custom in the old spot-stroke days, but not under existing rules.

Before any other sidelight bearing on this interesting subject is brought before me, I plunge straight-away into the matter that I meant to take up at the outset. The single control of the red ball is my text, and I will endeavour to treat it so that a fairly comprehensive idea of the system may be gained. As before, I start from an ideal position, and one that it should ever be the aim of the player to work up to. This ideal position is a point a foot and a half directly below the middle spot (see Fig. 86). It provides the player with the option of two of the easiest losing hazards. He can make his own angle, having the cue-ball "in hand," and it hardly needs the telling that such middle-pocket hazards are the simplest of their kind. It is, indeed, an ideal position, for even the veriest tyro should not stop short at half a dozen consecutively successful shots, whilst the average amateur would doubtless be more than surprised whenever he failed—if he did at all. The nearer the object-ball is brought to this point after each successive losing hazard, the simpler should the ensuing shot be.

Whether the red ball be driven on to the side cushions, or whether it comes back direct from the top cushion, it must always be the same stopping-place you wish it to take—as near as possible to the point I have described

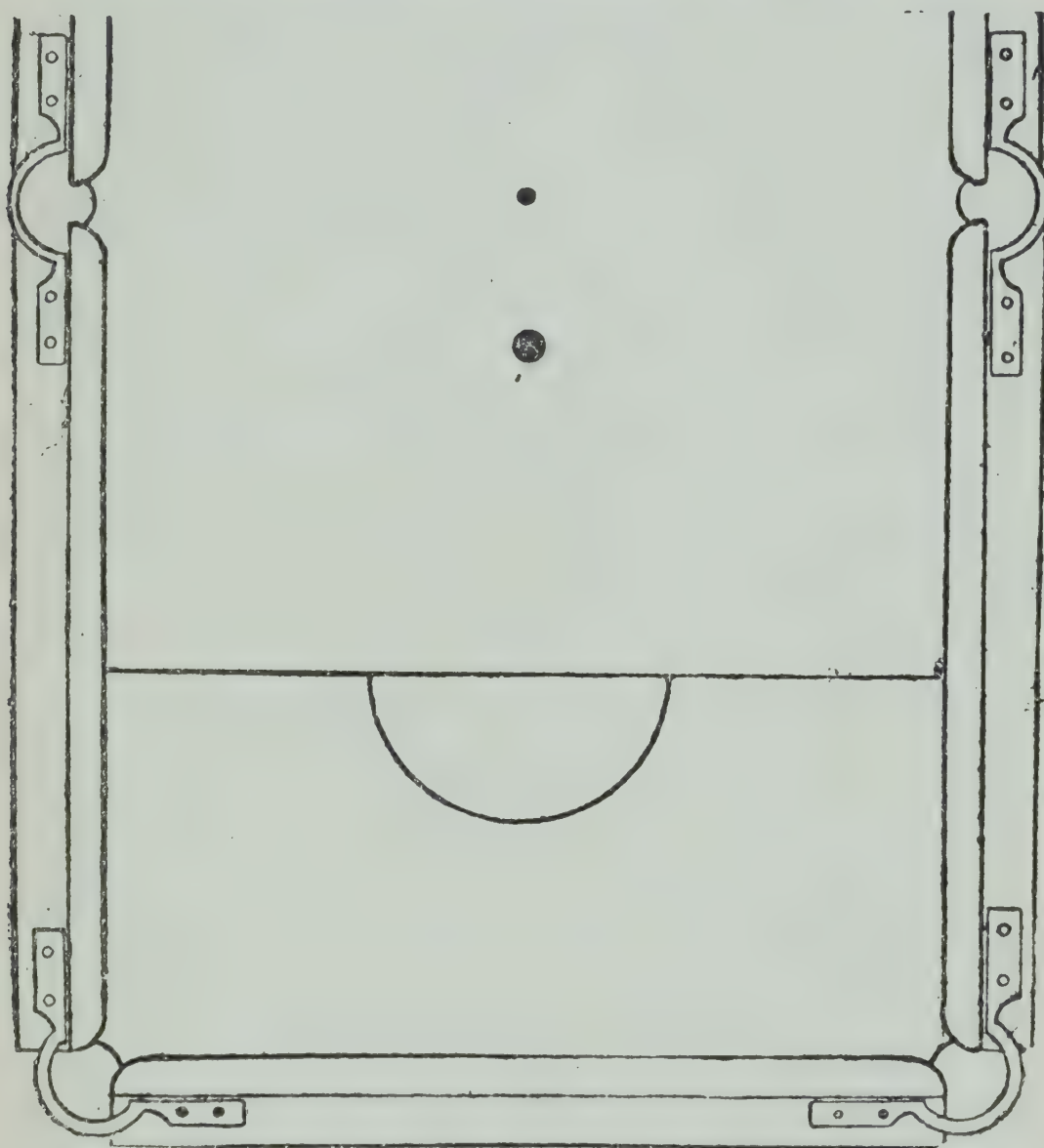


FIG. 86.—The ideal position for the "red-ball-control" break. This is at a point eighteen inches directly below the middle spot.

as the ideal position. Note the first-class cueists when they are manipulating a red ball break, how they are ever striving after the ideal position. The ball stops a little above the mark. It is not low enough for a middle-pocket hazard. Bang! and the long half-ball hazard is

made into a top pocket. Around the upper half of the table goes the object-ball, to again come close to the ideal position. Perhaps a second, a third, or a fourth stroke of the same kind may have to be made before middle-pocket work can be undertaken. Then, when it is, mark the precision that drives the red ball up to and back from the top cushion, causing it to return in a line for the ideal position. Short of it (this is the case nine times out of ten) the ball comes, and below it (occasionally) it comes, but seldom or never on the very spot. Yet such is the latitude this style of play affords, that a large margin is permitted above, below, and on either side of this ideal position for mistakes of direction and "strength" in a reasonable degree.

To begin to work upon my losing hazards I choose the left centre pocket, though, of course, the opposite one will serve my purpose equally well, seeing that I have only one object-ball on the table. To make the stroke I place my ball towards the right of the D to take the red slightly fuller than half-ball. I do so disregarding the obvious natural angle that I can adjust my ball to form. For I look more to the direction that I give to the red ball, which I wish to return as nearly as is possible to the ideal position, than I do to the losing hazard. The latter must be the product of the player's judgment. It is of no use scoring a losing hazard in the middle pocket by the easiest means—merely the natural angle—every time the opportunity is afforded you, as most do. The chief thing is the proper direction of the red ball, for all middle-pocket losing hazards are simple of execution when the object-ball is in the field of play.

My first stroke, the losing hazard in the left centre

pocket, affords an example, as most of these kind of shots will, of the combined effect that the requisite stroke on the cue-ball (whether this be fine, quarter-ball, half-ball, or three-quarter-ball) will bring about. The better you judge the placing of your ball for the stroke you need to make the losing hazard, and at the same time keep the object-ball to the centre of the table, the more will one stroke help the other. You study the direction you wish to enforce on the red ball, at the same time gauging the stroke that will take the cue-ball into the pocket.

In this left middle-pocket losing hazard I make a slightly fuller contact with the red than the regulation half-ball one without the use of any "side." If my judgment is accurate in directing the red ball, then the more certain am I to make the losing hazard, the one thing fitting naturally in with the other. So I play the stroke, and the result is as shown on Fig. 87. I have tried to bring the red ball back to its original resting-place (as on Fig. 86), but having made a thinner contact with it than I had intended, it goes to the right of that mark. My "strength" was good, and I kept the ball within the bounds of the losing-hazard area. From the time that the red got abreast of the pyramid spot on its return from the top cushion, it afforded opportunities of top-pocket losing-hazards. But in place of the optional "loser" in either middle pocket which the dead central position of the red ball gave me in my opening shot, I am now left with only the right middle pocket open. This is easy enough, of course, but the advantage of keeping the object-ball right in the middle of the table should emphasize itself by this illustration. Had I

played my stroke correctly, I should have had *both*

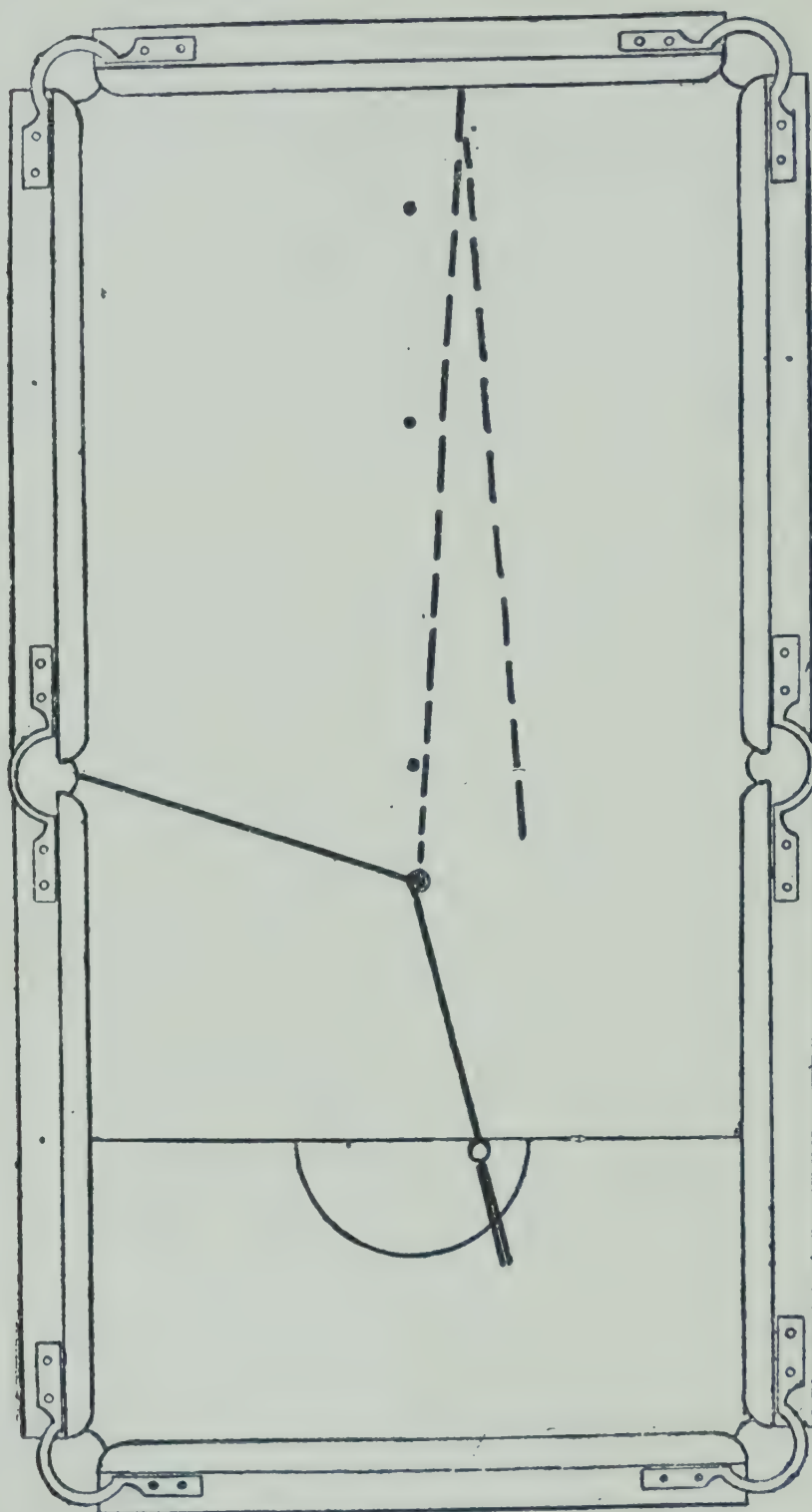


FIG. 87.—“Strength” good ; direction moderate.

middle pockets open to me and not *one* as now. To enable my readers to better follow the run of the red

ball, I intend to give measurements of each position. In the first stroke the red returns to a point 23 inches from the right baulk side cushion, and exactly a foot wide and below the centre spot line.

My next stroke (see Fig. 88) is just a plain half-ball one, that being the medium which should give proper direction of the red ball, causing it to traverse the centre of the table. This time I play the stroke considerably too hard—a bad mistake. I bring the red ball to within three inches of the baulk line, and five inches wide of a line drawn from the right spot of the D straight up the table. The one redeeming feature about the stroke is the fact that I have given the red ball fairly good direction. It gives yet another illustration of the value of direction in this losing-hazard play. Had the red been wide of the face of the D, I should have been in serious difficulties, but as it stops within the losing-hazard area, I can still resume with three shots before me. There is a losing hazard into either of the middle pockets, or a red winner into the right middle pocket, where, by following the red ball up, I may obtain an angle for a subsequent losing hazard from the spotted red ball. But as I am upon losing hazards bent, I will not interfere with their sequence at this early period of the break.

I choose to play a losing hazard into the left middle pocket because, of the two, it is much the more open one. The aperture of the right middle pocket barely shows at all from where the cue-ball would have to be placed to make a losing hazard into it. In this and similar strokes it is best to play for the middle pocket that is furthest away from the object-ball. They are none too easy, and

should be an object-lesson in the matter of restraining

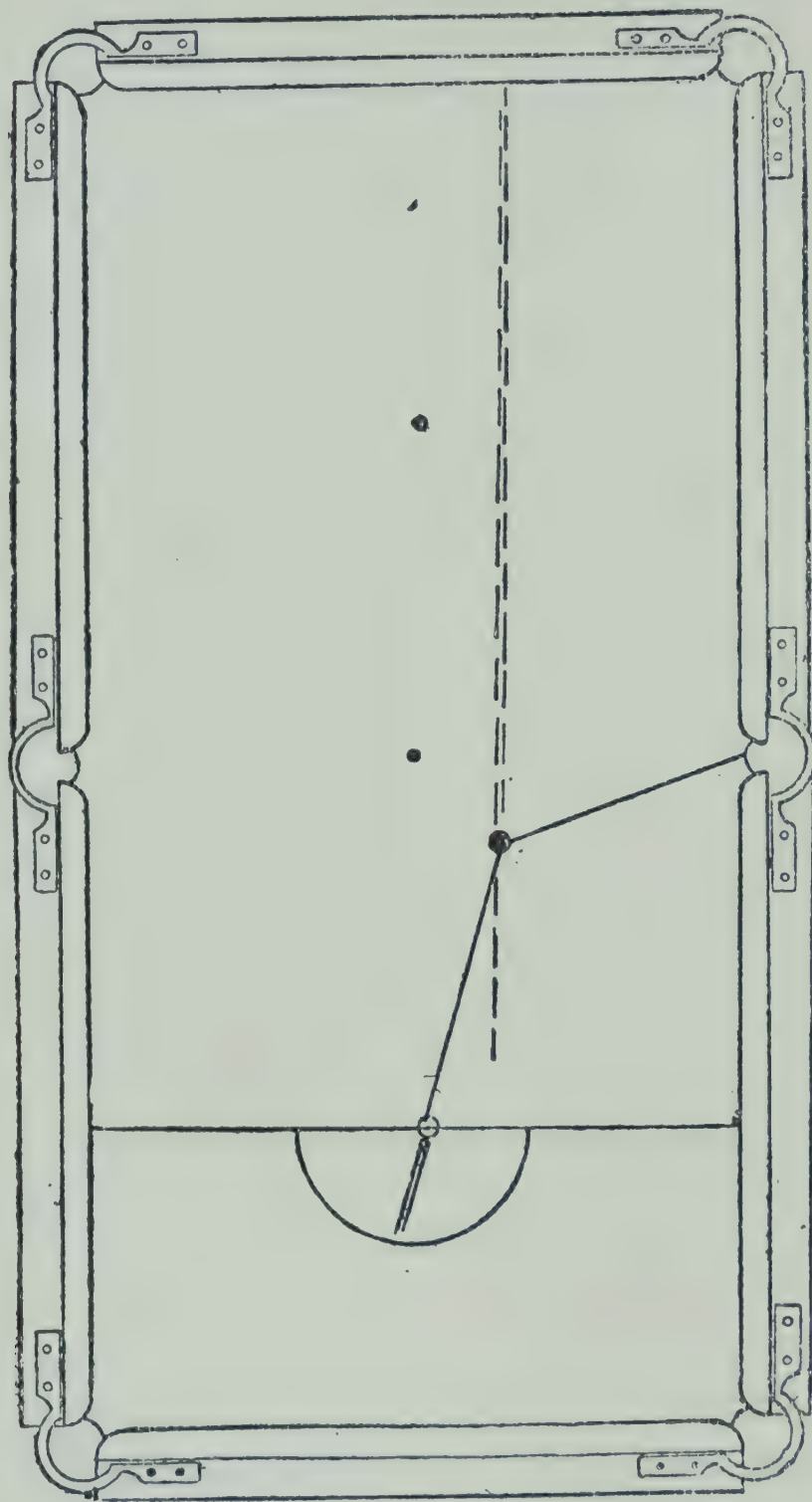


FIG. 88.—“Strength” bad ; direction good.

force in the stroke. Better be short of middle-pocket “strength” than commit the error that I have done of

bringing the object-ball close to the baulk line. Keeping the object-ball in the middle of the table, you always have a simple top-pocket hazard on as soon as it arrives at the pyramid spot from the top cushion. These are much to be preferred to the awkward thin little shots, which are rendered doubly difficult by the object-ball lying so closely to the baulk line, which prevents the angle of the shot being rendered as plainly as when the balls are wider apart.

Just notice the leading players when they are operating on a strange table, and observe how they feel their way with the losing hazards. They do not attempt at the outset to bring the object-ball back over the middle pockets. They are satisfied to go on with the top ones until the pace of the table has been made apparent to them. See the object-ball first of all comes a foot below the pyramid spot following a middle-pocket losing hazard. They will take no risks. Then it comes two feet below the pyramid spot, then three feet, and so on until the "strength" that is required to give position for the ideal losing hazard (the optional one in either centre pocket) has been gained. This procedure should be ever borne in mind. Better a thousand times lack of strength (strength that keeps the object-ball anywhere between the middle and pyramid spots) than strength which brings it near the baulk line.

I play the thin losing hazard into the left middle pocket with the idea of keeping the red ball inside the middle pocket losing-hazard range of fire. The right middle pocket is its direction. It must go up to or close to it, for I only play the stroke with just sufficient pace to enable the cue-ball to reach its objective—the left

middle pocket. To make the most of what little pace I

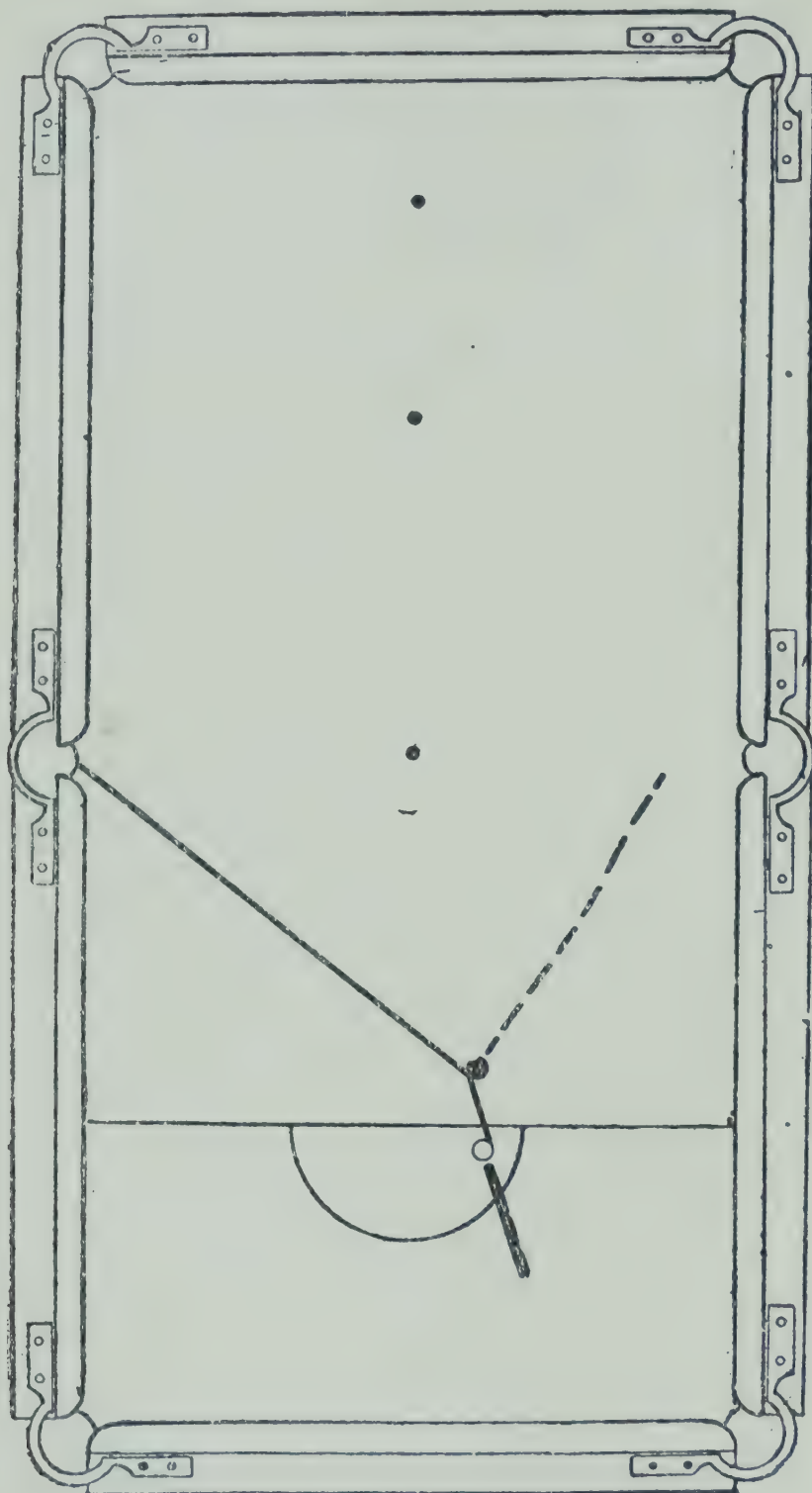


FIG. 89.—A good slow, thin stroke.

do use, I hit my ball—the cue-ball—near the top. No “side” is wanted in the stroke. Slowly the cue-ball

rolls on to the pocket following a most gentle and thin contact with the red. I make the shot, and the position left is as seen on Fig. 89, where the red ball has taken up a position close to the right middle pocket. It falls short of the latter's centre by $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches and is $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches away from the side cushion. In this and the previous stroke measurements are made to the centre of the red ball.

As the red ball is now located, I have an easy losing hazard into the right middle pocket left me. This I may obtain in one of two ways—either by a thick or a thin contact with my object-ball. Now, in this matter there is a very useful lesson to be learnt, and that lesson is the superiority of the thick stroke over a thin one in controlling an object-ball. The thin strokes of any but the very slowest kind are most uncertain and treacherous. By means of a thick contact, however, a much more certain control of its movements may be had. Try the two kinds of contact, and see for yourselves how much more simple and sure is the thick one to ensure the directing of the object-ball to any given point.

I provide two examples on Figs. 90 and 91. The first shows the losing hazard made by a thin stroke which cuts the red ball almost straight down to the top cushion, as such strokes generally do. To enable me to place the cue-ball further to the left of the D, to make this cutting of the object-ball more pronounced, I make use of right "side." The reason of this will soon become apparent on a study of the red ball's position. My aim is to keep it away from the side cushion, for there is the danger of its catching in the jaws of the top pocket, stopping short of, or over-running, the middle pocket, and thus

getting out of play. What I try to do is the same old

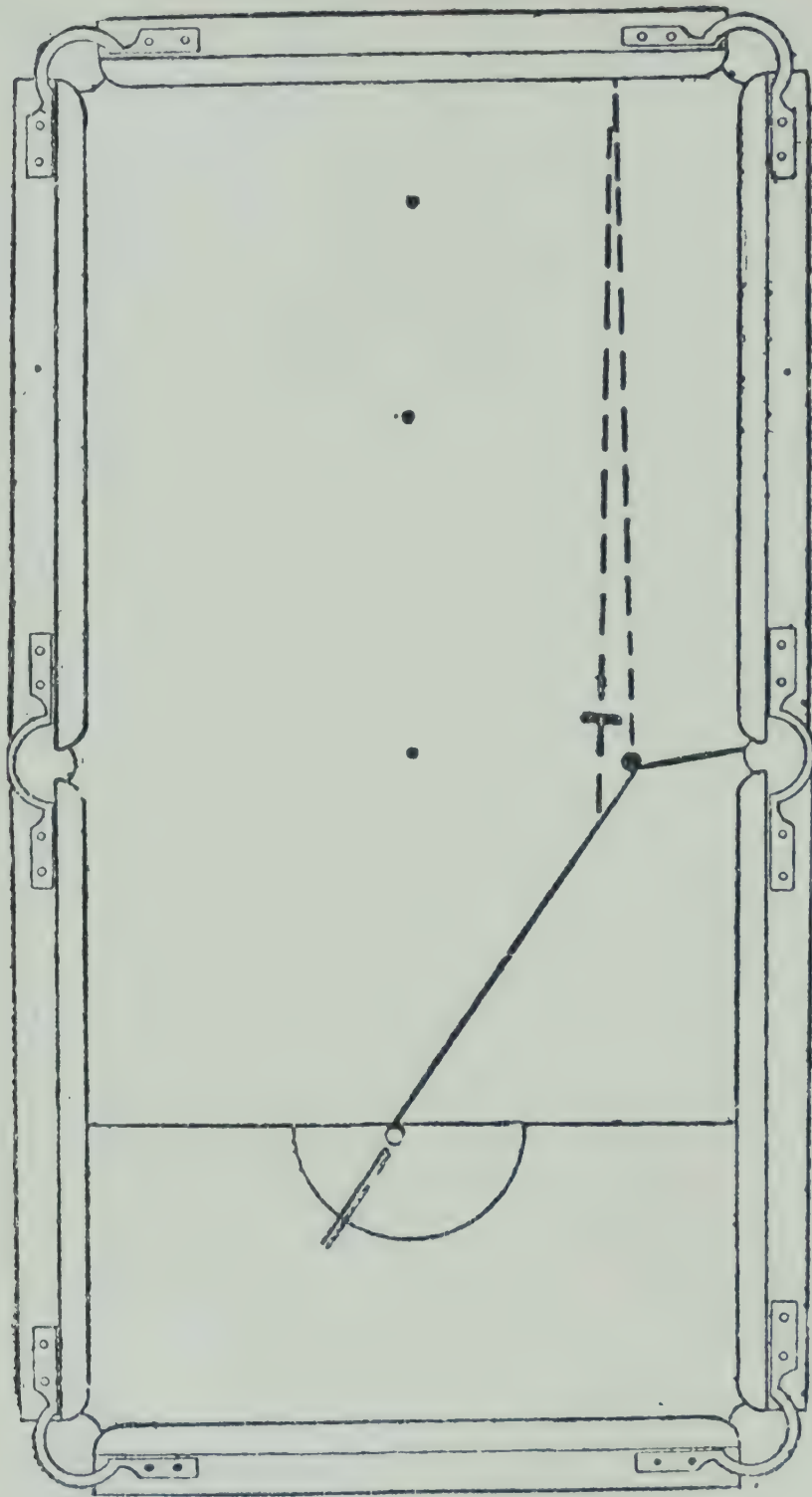


FIG. 90.—The thin cutting shot.

thing, as in all the losing-hazard work—the directing of the object-ball to the centre of the table. I bring the

ball back from the top cushion, nearer, perhaps, to the

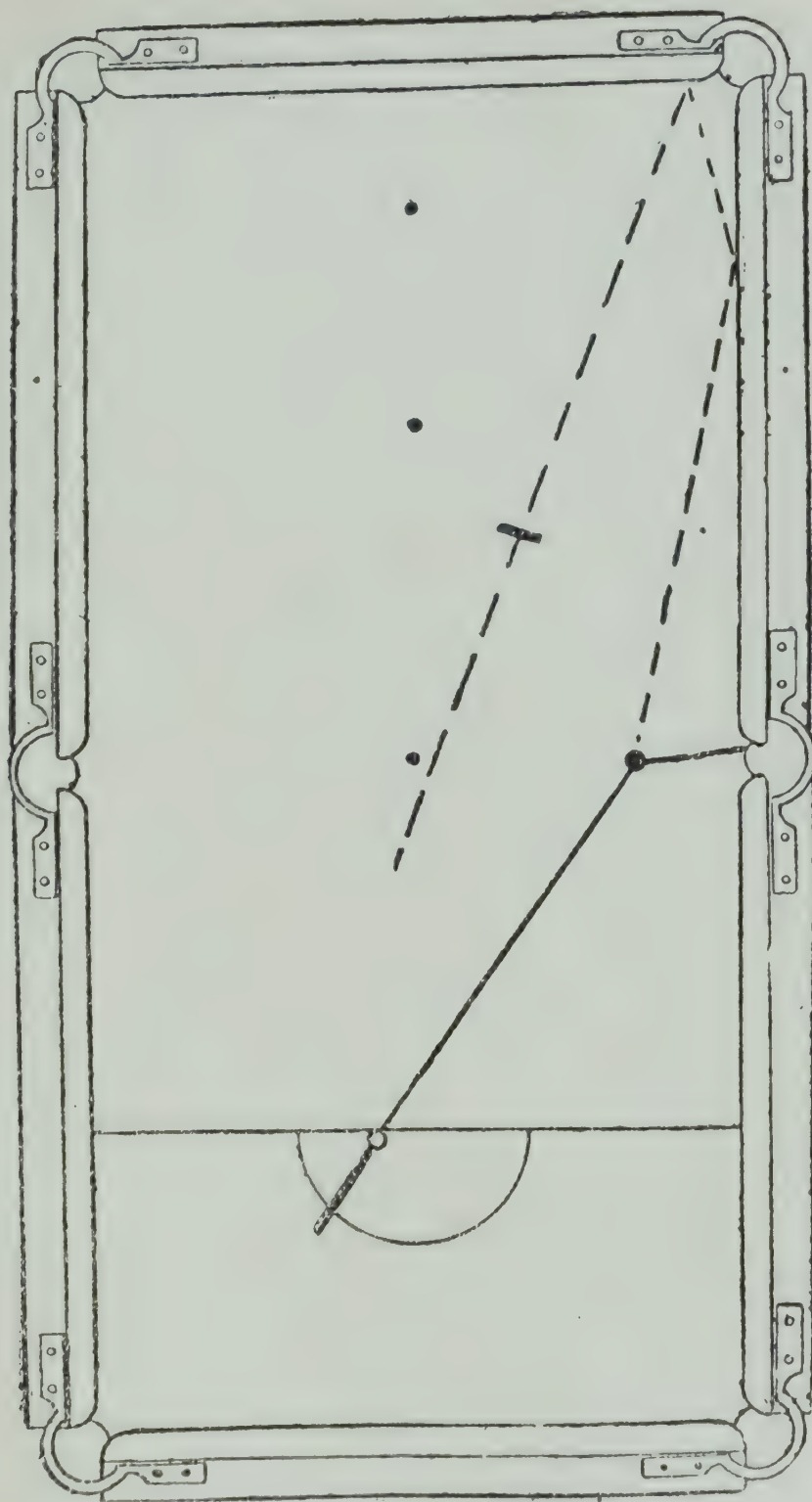


FIG. 91.—The thick contact bringing the object-ball out to the middle of the table by means of the side and top cushions.

centre pocket than I should have done. But to find

the central line of the table would have needed a remarkably well-played stroke of the thin order. As I have played it, the red ball gets from its defined resting-place as near to the middle of the table as most shots will take it. The great defect in this thin contact, however, apart from its greater demand upon the touch and judgment of the player, is the long period that the object-ball is kept practically out of play. For not until it returns to the point where a mark is put across the dotted line that indicates its course, can it be said to provide anything approaching a scoring position.

Now note on Fig. 91, by the same indication (the mark across the dotted lines), how much earlier the object-ball comes into play again by a thick contact with it. A three-quarter-ball stroke is needed. It will be found necessary to place the cue-ball about midway between the middle and left spots of the D to give the needed direction to the red. The latter will be driven on to the side cushion, some six inches short of the billiard spot line. Thence taking the top cushion it returns down the table, coming into losing-hazard play again when it arrives at the marked position, about a foot below the pyramid spot. As I played the shot, I caused the red ball to find its way almost to my ideal position in the middle of the table for an optional "loser" into either middle pocket. It stops two inches to the left of my ideal, which, as I have explained, is eighteen inches directly below the middle spot.

Another very simple losing hazard is left for me to continue with on both sides of the table. It does not require much thought to select the left middle pocket

one. The demands of a good after-position dictate that this shall be the stroke. For by its agency the keeping of the object-ball to the control line of the table is a very easy matter. The loser into the right middle pocket is "on," but it does not afford the same latitude for the placing of the cue-ball to give the object-ball the needed direction. As may be seen, even to play the left middle-pocket hazard the cue-ball is placed right up in the further extremity of the D. This ensures the playing of the half-run-through stroke—one of the most important factors in cultured losing-hazard play. The hazard into the right centre pocket necessitates a half-ball stroke, which, seeing that the object-ball is already centrally placed, must take it out of its proper channel. That is too obvious to need commenting upon. It only serves to bring a light to bear on the application of the different kinds of strokes that go to keep an object-ball in the field of play. *The half-ball and thin strokes are used in middle pocket losing-hazard operations to direct the object-ball into the centre of the table and the run-through strokes to keep it there.* A good and dependable rule is to use reverse "side" for the run through, and running "side" for the thin shots, of all varieties.

Well, I play the half-run-through stroke into the left middle pocket. A perfectly plain ball is all that is needed. Straight up the table and back again travels the red, to stop dead in the middle line of the table, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches to the left of the centre spot. It shows good direction, but not particularly good strength. Anyhow, I have kept the red ball to the centre of the field of play, and both top pockets are open to my losing hazard. The right one is the more open of the two, but I do not

play it, as I can direct the red ball around to the middle

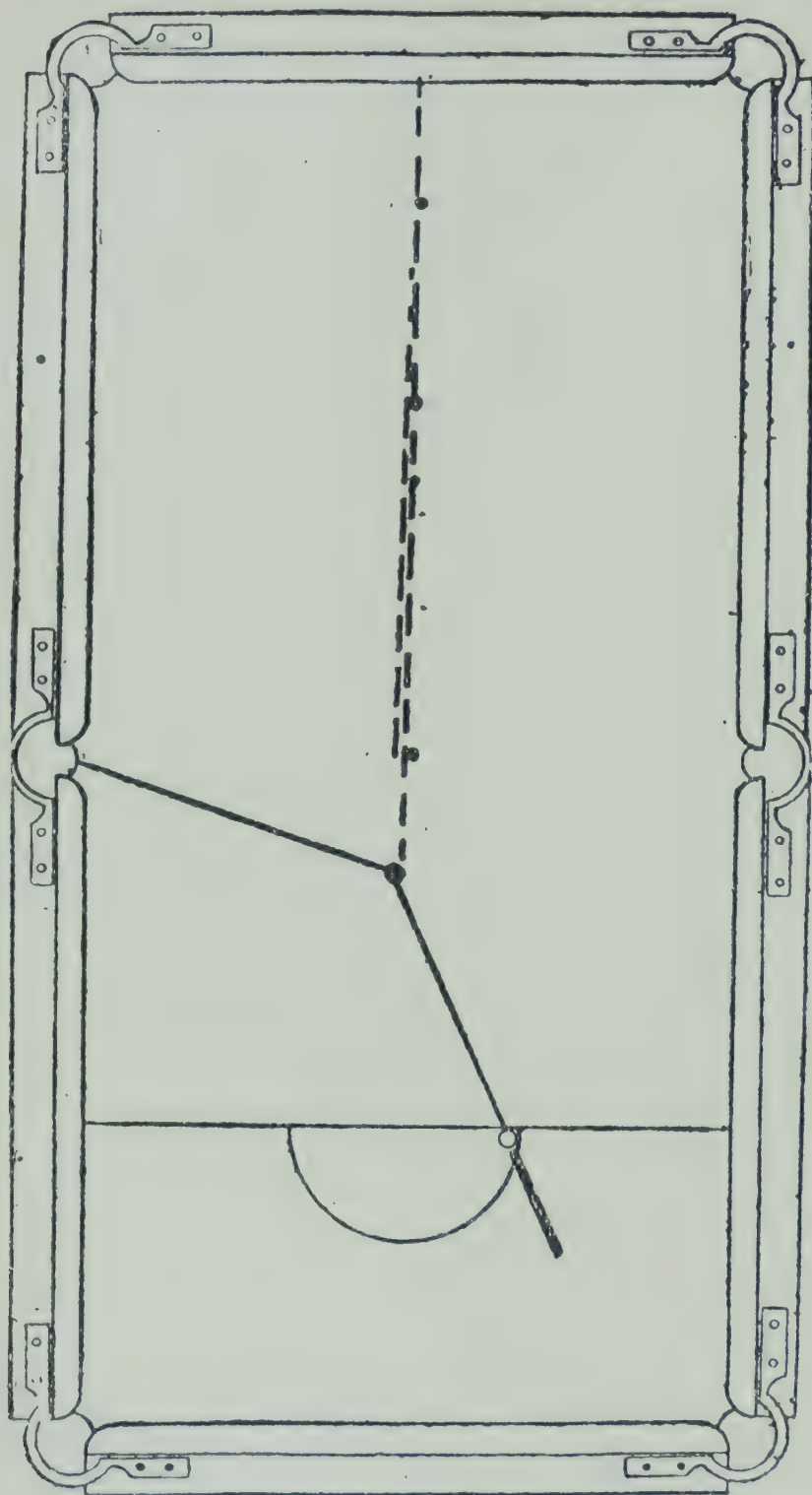


FIG. 92.—A half run-through stroke. The object-ball is kept well in the centre of the table.

of the table by playing for the left top pocket. There

is less likelihood of its being driven so far up the side cushion as will take it away from the objective point (the ideal position). If the pocket is not too difficult, one should always play at the obtuse side of the table (as in Fig. 93) for the long-range losing hazards. They bring the object-ball so squarely around the upper half of the table. Striking the first side cushion somewhere equi-distant from the pyramid and billiard spots, it takes its second and third cushions at such an angle as carries it out towards the middle of the table. This ever-recurring phrase—the middle of the table—should not be lost upon my readers. It is there that I wish the object-ball to find a resting-place after the making of each hazard. Chosen pockets play none but a disastrous part in losing-hazard work when the player is operating from the D. Anywhere between the pyramid spot and, say, a couple of feet below the centre spot (further than that complications are likely to ensue) will suit his purpose so long as the ball is in the middle of the table. Of course, *the* point is that which I term the ideal one—a foot and a half below the centre spot. Always try and work up to that. Practice of this style of game will inevitably bring a surprising improvement to those who adopt it for the first time. The soundness of it is beyond all question. With the cultivation of losing-hazard play will come, bit by bit, an increased knowledge of the object-ball's correct path in all sorts and conditions of strokes. This will form a fairly liberal billiard education in itself.

Returning to Fig. 93, I illustrate thereon the manner in which the object-ball circuits the upper half of the table, following my long half-ball, fairly high-speeded

"loser" into the left top pocket. Again my direction

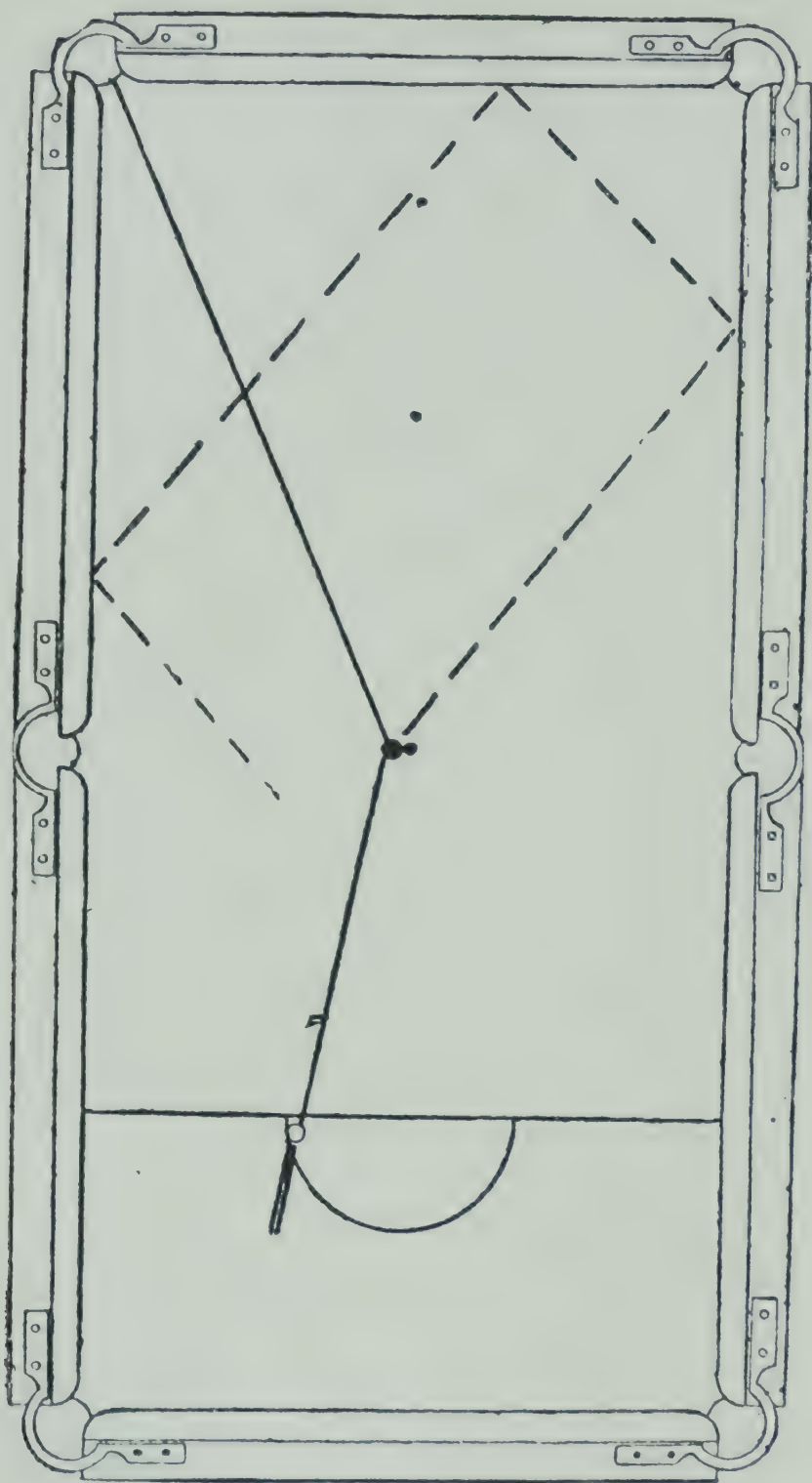


FIG. 93.—Long half-ball losing hazard. Direction and "strength" alike very good.

of the red ball is good (the dotted line will be seen

extending towards the ideal position), but the pace slightly inadequate. Although the ball has not returned to the central line of the board, it has yet come within the field of losing-hazard play. Its exact disposition is 6 inches below the centre spot line, and $21\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the side cushion position for another middle pocket hazard.

Left with the red ball near the left middle pocket, a certain losing hazard is, of course, on, but not a half-ball one. The red has to be so struck that it will go towards the middle of the table. Here we have a nice illustration of the remark I made at the outset of my losing-hazard lessons. Then I said that, generally speaking, the driving of the object-ball to a favourable position upon making a losing hazard, necessitated the stroke being rendered a little more difficult than would have been the case if there had only been the "loser" to study. As placed, it would be a very simple proceeding to go in half-ball off the red. But where would the latter travel? Somewhere down by the left top pocket opening, depend upon it, where it might catch in the jaws and run under the threatening shadow of the top cushion, or fall into the pocket, and thus end the break. Instead of playing half-ball I make a much finer contact (about quarter-ball) with the red, directing it towards the middle point of the top cushion. I make my angle for this stroke by placing my ball well to the right of the D, and use left "side" and pace pretty freely. All these cutting strokes should be played with running "side," as it helps very much both in throwing the cue-ball off the object-ball at the proper angle (one has a tendency in playing quarter-ball contacts to aim too "fine") and helping the ball as it takes

the pocket. Running "side" for cuts, and reverse "side" for run-through strokes, is the approved principle.

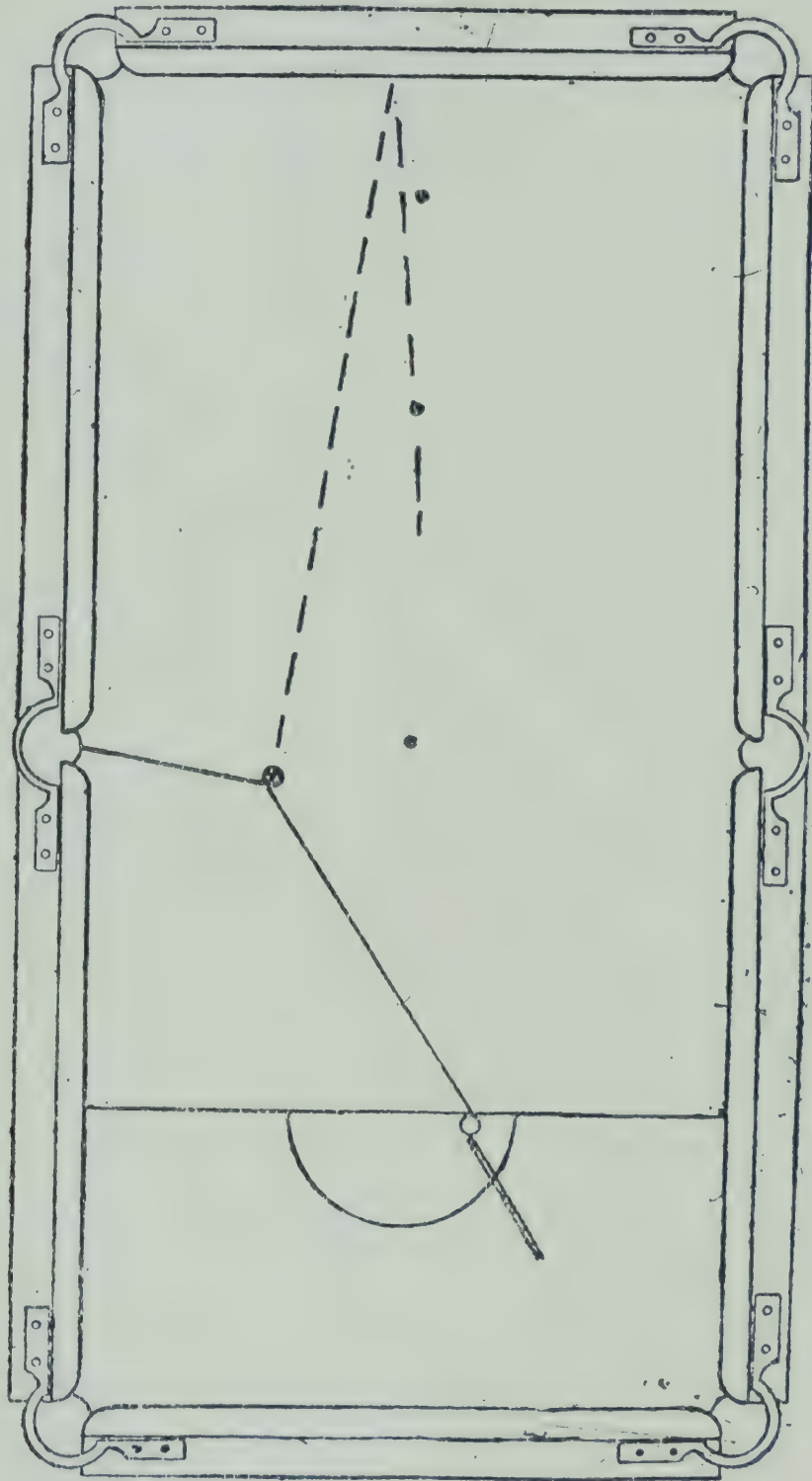


FIG. 94.—A thinnish left "side" stroke, putting the object-ball in the centre of the table.

As I made my stroke the red came back down the

table to a point $12\frac{1}{4}$ inches above the pyramid spot, about half an inch to the right of the middle of the table (see Fig. 94). In these "cut" strokes the thin impact between cue and object-balls naturally does not give the same momentum to the latter that a thicker contact would have done. Well above medium pace, as I played it, the red ball has stopped two feet short of the middle spot. Still, I am perfectly satisfied, as the top pockets fairly gape at me from either side of it. Both are "on," but acting up to the advice that I gave to always play at the obtuse side of the table for top-pocket losing hazards (when not unreasonably difficult, of course), I play for the right corner pocket. Laying my ball about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches to the right of the D's centre spot, without using any "side," and playing good medium pace and half-ball on the red I make the losing hazard. On to the top cushion goes the coloured ball, and runs up to the centre of the table by means of the left top side cushion (see Fig. 95). Again it will be noted the red ball was well directed towards the ideal position. My "strength" is again bad, still I continue in touch with my losing hazards, for the red ball is 1 inch below the middle spot line, and $21\frac{1}{4}$ inches from the left middle-pocket opening. There is a "screw" forcing hazard into the middle pocket, or a right top-pocket loser. I choose the former stroke, it being a more simple matter to keep a ball in the middle of the table when it can be played direct on to the top cushion than by the medium of the side cushions. Also, it does not require much comment to advocate the playing of a middle pocket when possible, as against a top pocket. I therefore play the middle-pocket

hazard, making the angle rather a square one, and

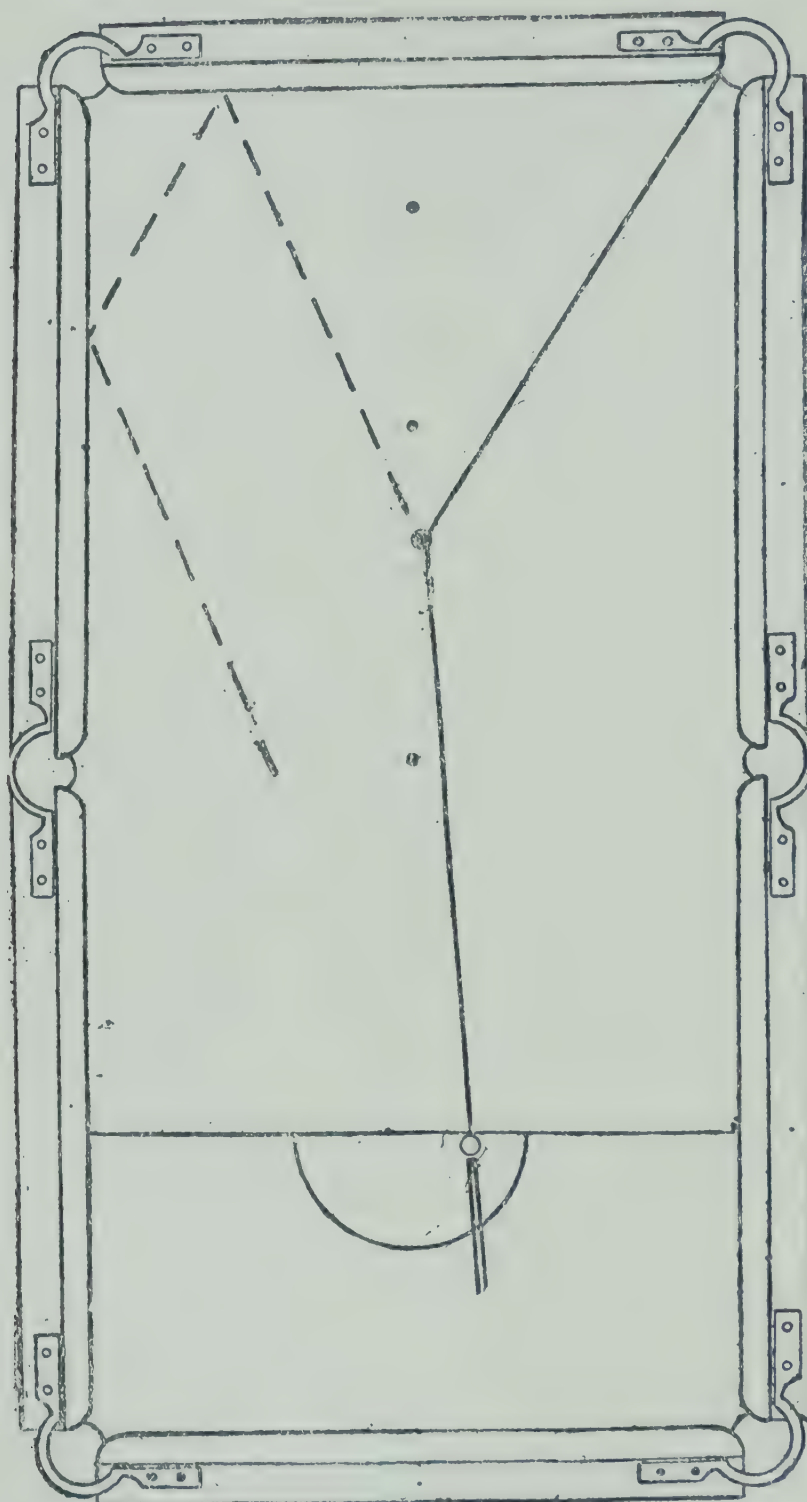


FIG. 95.—Direction good ; " strength " inadequate.

trying to catch the red at three-quarter-ball, with pace enough to drive it in and out of baulk up and down the

central line of the table. As things turn out, I hit the red somewhat finer than I had intended—only a very little more than half-ball. It passes through baulk, as I intended to, but my bad stroke upon it almost takes it out of the field of losing-hazard play. Almost, but not quite (as per Fig. 96). Its measurements (to the centre of the ball as usual) are $21\frac{1}{4}$ inches from the right top side cushion, and $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches above the middle spot line.

The red ball is now practically out of the bounds of losing-hazard jurisdiction. There are left me four possible ways of scoring from it, each and all, however, being of an uncertain character. A forcible "screw" into the right middle pocket, a slow "drag" running "side" stroke over to the left top pocket, or a powerful forcing hazard there, and, as a last resource, a stabbing of the red into the right top pocket, leaving the cue-ball under the shadow of the right top side cushion for an ensuing losing hazard from the spotted red ball. None of the quartette possesses the assured certainty of execution which is the leading feature of losing-hazard play on the red ball. One cannot take too many risks from the fact that your opponent is lying securely in ambush—that is, "in hand"—ready to take advantage of any slip you may make. So it is now better to assume a defensive rather than an aggressive attitude. A double baulk appeals, and it undoubtedly is "the game." Spotting the cue-ball on the left spot of the D I aim half-full on the red, using plenty of pace, and hitting my ball high up to get as much run as possible out of it. The red ball describes a sort of Z going around the table into baulk, where it is followed by the

more directly travelling cue-ball. To make the double

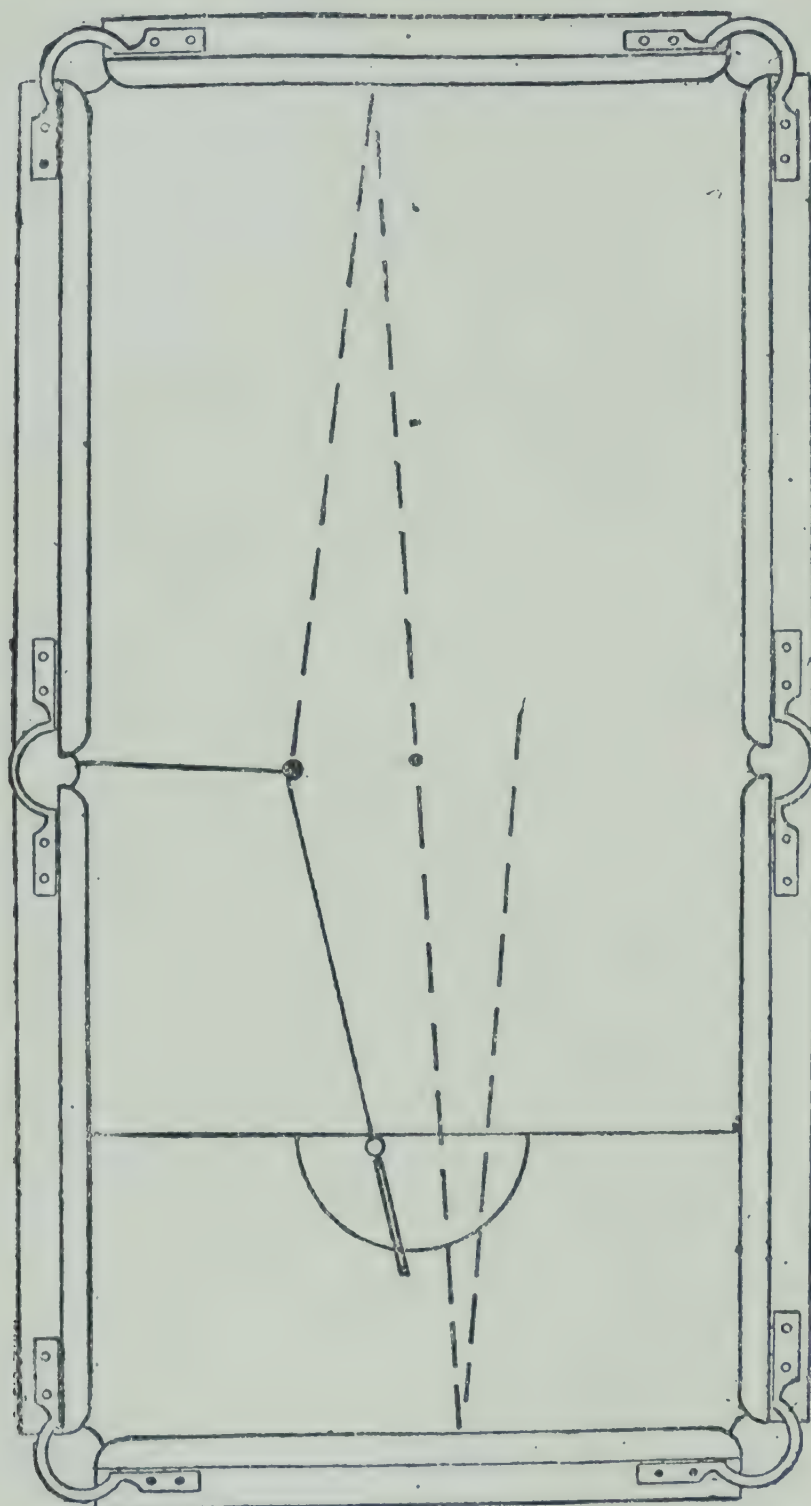


FIG. 96.—A strongish "screw" shot. "Strength" good ; direction poor.

baulk the cue-ball must find the top cushion straightway from its thick contact with the red ball, as shown on

Fig. 97. That is one variant—and a very useful one,

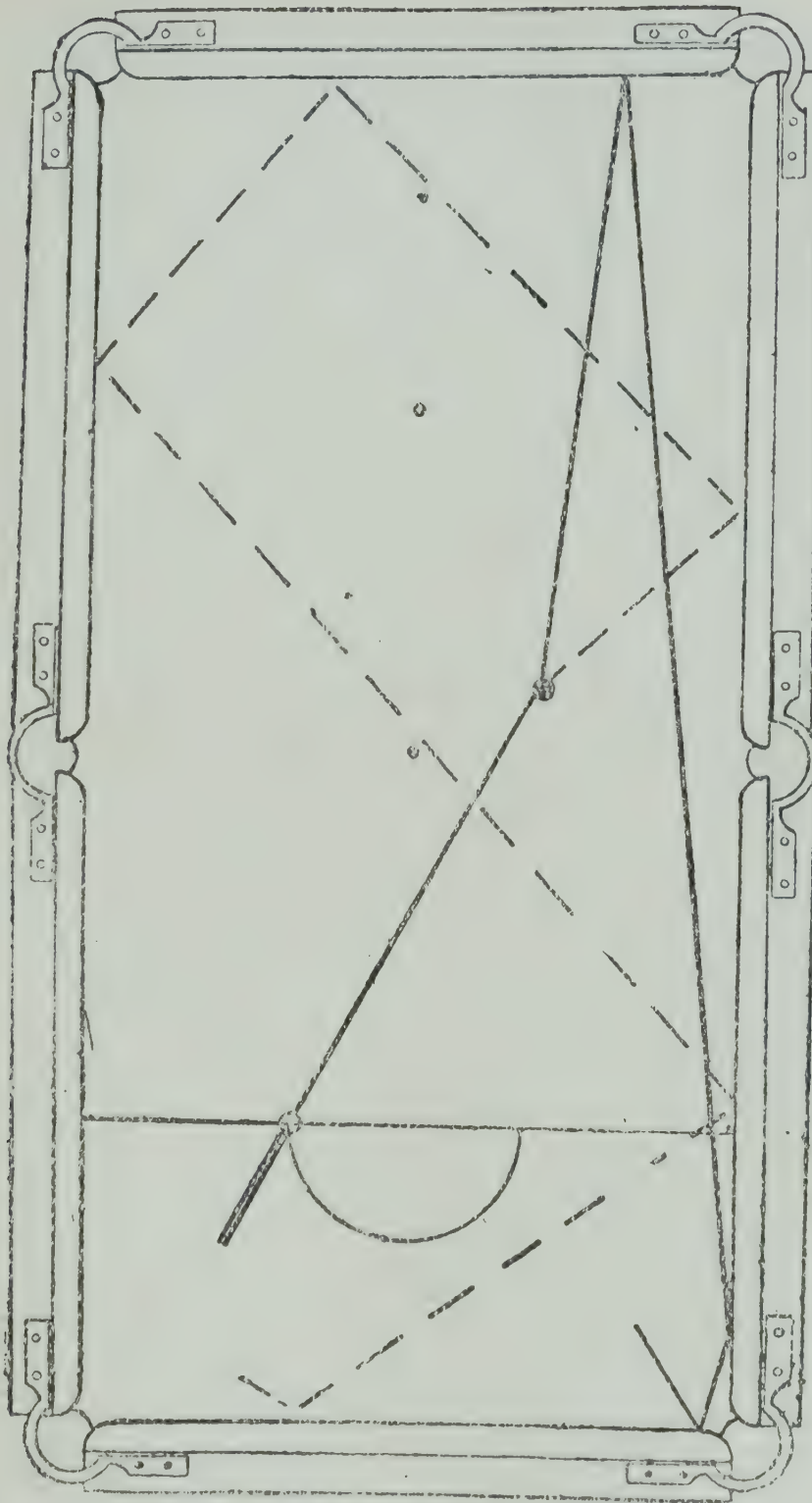


FIG. 97.—Double-baulk ending the red-ball control.

too—of the conduct of single ball losing-hazard play.

A SERIES OF LOSING HAZARDS.

To make these various positions instructive, I show the shots exactly as I played them with all their imperfections. An array of perfectly played strokes would, I take it, be of very little service, as no one that I have ever seen plays perfect position at all times. My break is as any amateur would be likely to play it. To show up the defects in my aim, and not to place an ideal standard which, so far, has not been attained by any billiard player past or present, I leave the red ball $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the middle pocket line, and $20\frac{3}{4}$ inches from the left baulk side cushion.

I place the red ball two inches further to the middle of the table than it was in the last stroke of the red-ball control (see Fig. 97). Its exact position is $23\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the right top-side cushion, and $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches above the middle spot line. Now it is just on the border of the field of losing-hazard play, and is so placed as to afford the making of one of the most taking losing hazards it is possible to see. To obtain this the cue-ball has to be loaded with "drag," and left "side." A perfect half-ball contact with the red and a placing of the cue-ball on the right spot of the D are the other accessories of this beautiful shot. The "drag" on your ball will counteract the presence of the "side" until contact is made, so that no allowance is needed to be made in the aim for the presence of the bias. An under-stroke on the extreme left of the ball, it is played as gently as possible to obtain all the benefit of the

pulling left "side," for the angle to the left top pocket is much wider than the natural one. Crack! the impact at half-ball is made, and the cue-ball is spinning over to its destination—the left top pocket. At first the "side" does not materially affect the angle thrown, but as the pace of the ball diminishes bit by bit, so does the effect of the "side" begin to be more appreciably noticed. Pulling, and ever pulling, over to the left, the course that the cue-ball follows is roughly described on Fig. 98. It is the result of "side" working upon the nap of the cloth that induces this result. That subject I dealt with at great length in earlier lessons. Upon either side of the table, using "side" in a corresponding manner to the direction the cue-ball has to take its path, this pretty and exceedingly useful stroke may be executed. It displaces the more primitive and decidedly more difficult forcing hazard. The running "side" is so helpful, that even if the ball only reaches the top cushion "shoulder" it will be carried in by this influence. With regard to the position of the object-ball in this and similar strokes, the pyramid spot should be the objective point. Anywhere after striking the top cushion right to the pyramid spot an easy angle "loser" from the D is always on. As I played the shot I brought the red ball (as per Fig. 98) $20\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the top cushion and $23\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the side cushion, which gives a losing hazard into the right top pocket.

The shot shown on Fig. 99 is one which is usually mishandled. To keep the red ball to the middle of the table requires a "drag" shot at slow pace, with a little left "side," making the angle of the stroke a trifle more

narrow than the ordinary half-ball one. The "side"

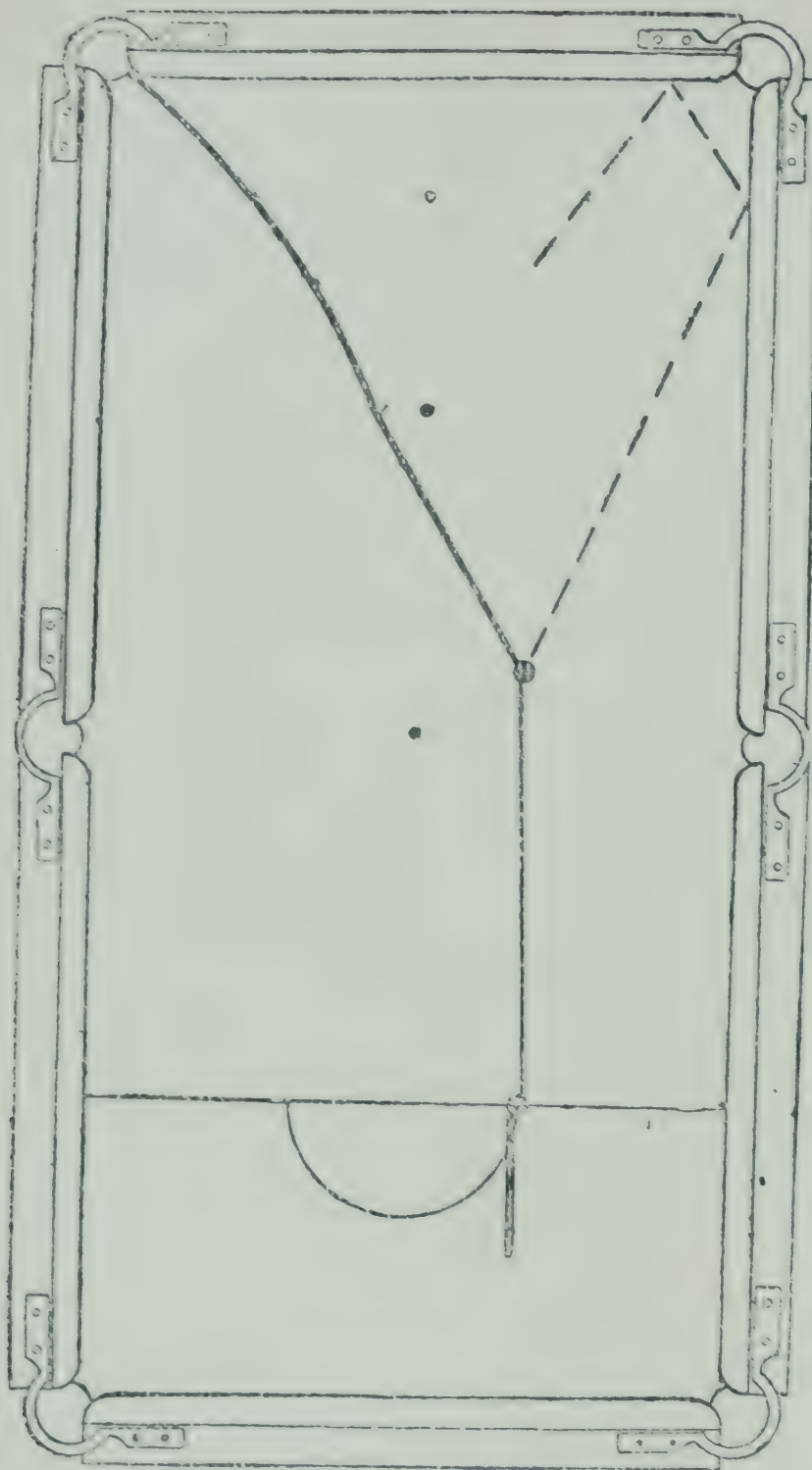


FIG. 98.—Long dragging "side" stroke, instead of a forcing one, at a wide angle "loser."

ensures the object-ball being taken more fully than the half-ball aim you take, which proceeding tends to keep

the red ball to the central line of the table. I play the

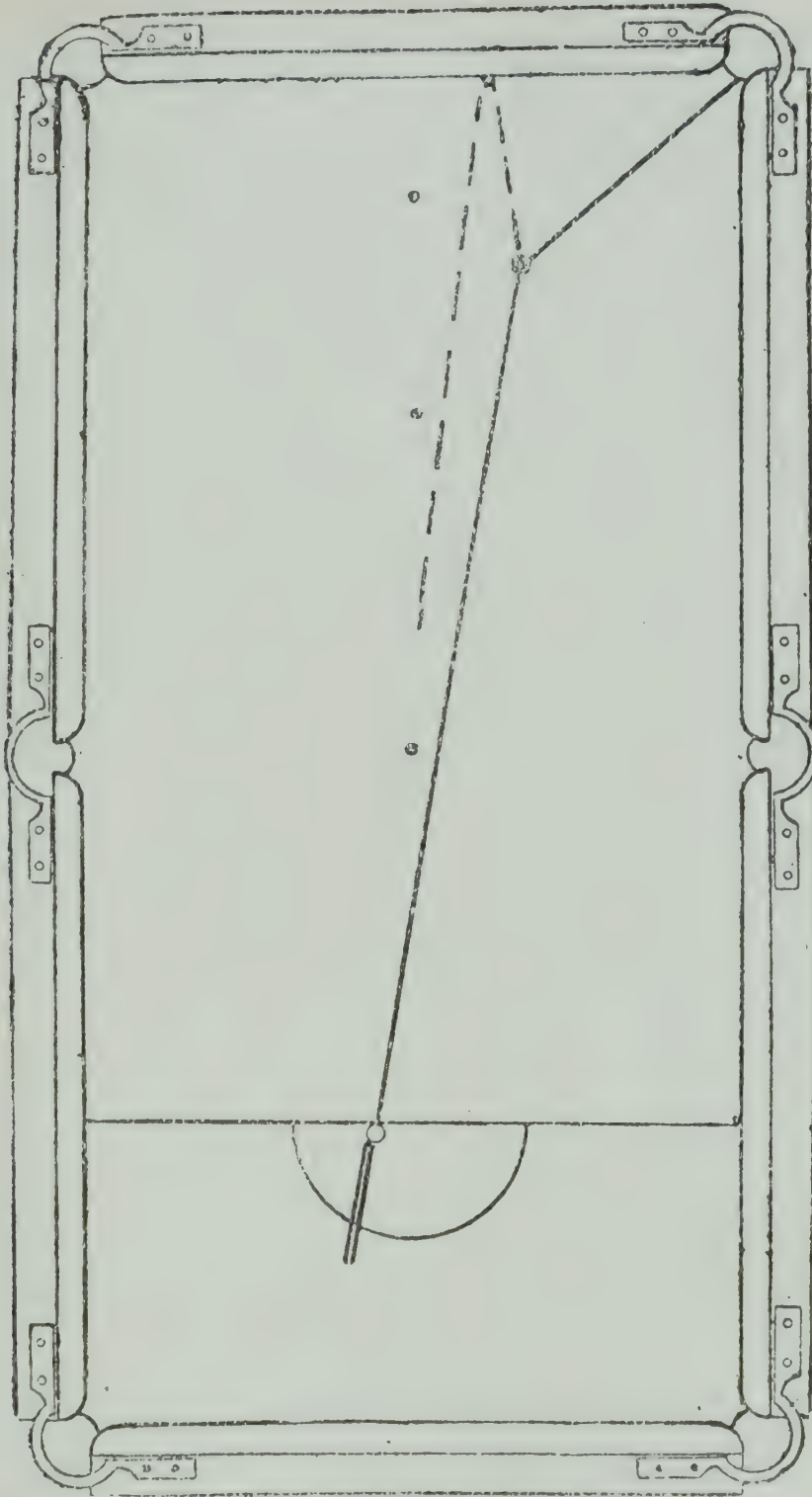


FIG. 99.—Half running through the object-ball by using left "side," thus keeping it to the centre of the table.

stroke and make it pretty well as I wanted to. Back down towards the middle spot comes the red ball, to

stop thirteen inches short of it, and half an inch to the right of the table.

I am now left with a rather nasty stroke (see Fig. 100). It is not the hazard that is difficult, but the matter of driving the red ball securely to a favourable after-position. The danger that I have to avoid in this connection is the liability of the red ball to get entangled in the jaws of the opposite top pocket to the one in which I desire the cue-ball to penetrate. Always bear in mind that the more centrally the object-ball is located between the middle spot and pyramid spot, the more is this danger to be apprehended. To counteract it, the player must make a finer contact with the object-ball than the natural angle would necessitate. The idea is to cut the red to the side cushion, and not drive it into the jaws of the top pocket, or so far along the side cushion as will bring it too far below the middle pockets for losing-hazard play into them. This latter stroke not infrequently takes the object-ball behind baulk.

I arrange my ball for playing about a quarter-ball contact at the narrowest side of the table to the right top pocket. The cue-ball almost midway between the middle and right spots of the D. To discount the fineness of the stroke I am to play, I bring to my aid right "side" and pace on the cue-ball. Both elements conduce to broaden the passage of the latter. A plentiful application of pace is requisitioned to bring the red ball out to the vicinity of the middle spot after it has traversed and encircled the upper half of the table. By bad aim I cause a very much thicker impact of the balls than I had intended. I catch the red nearly half-ball, and, although I make the hazard, it may be described as

a fortunate result. In the respect of the run of the red

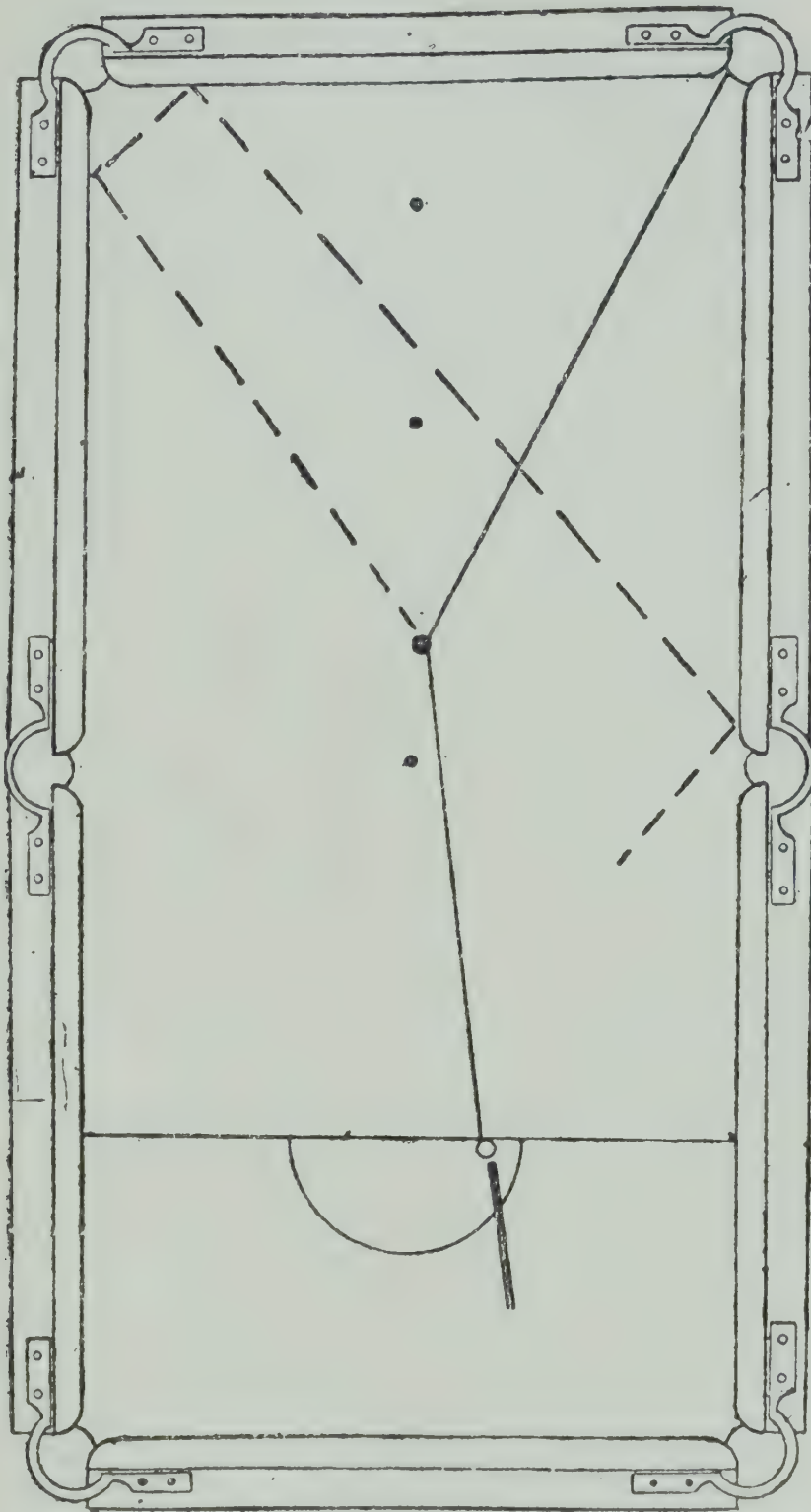


FIG. 100.—A strong, cutting, right "side" stroke keeping the object-ball away from the left top-pocket, or its "shoulders."

ball I am also favoured. It takes the side cushion several inches below the left top pocket opening, and

running up to the middle pocket comes $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches below

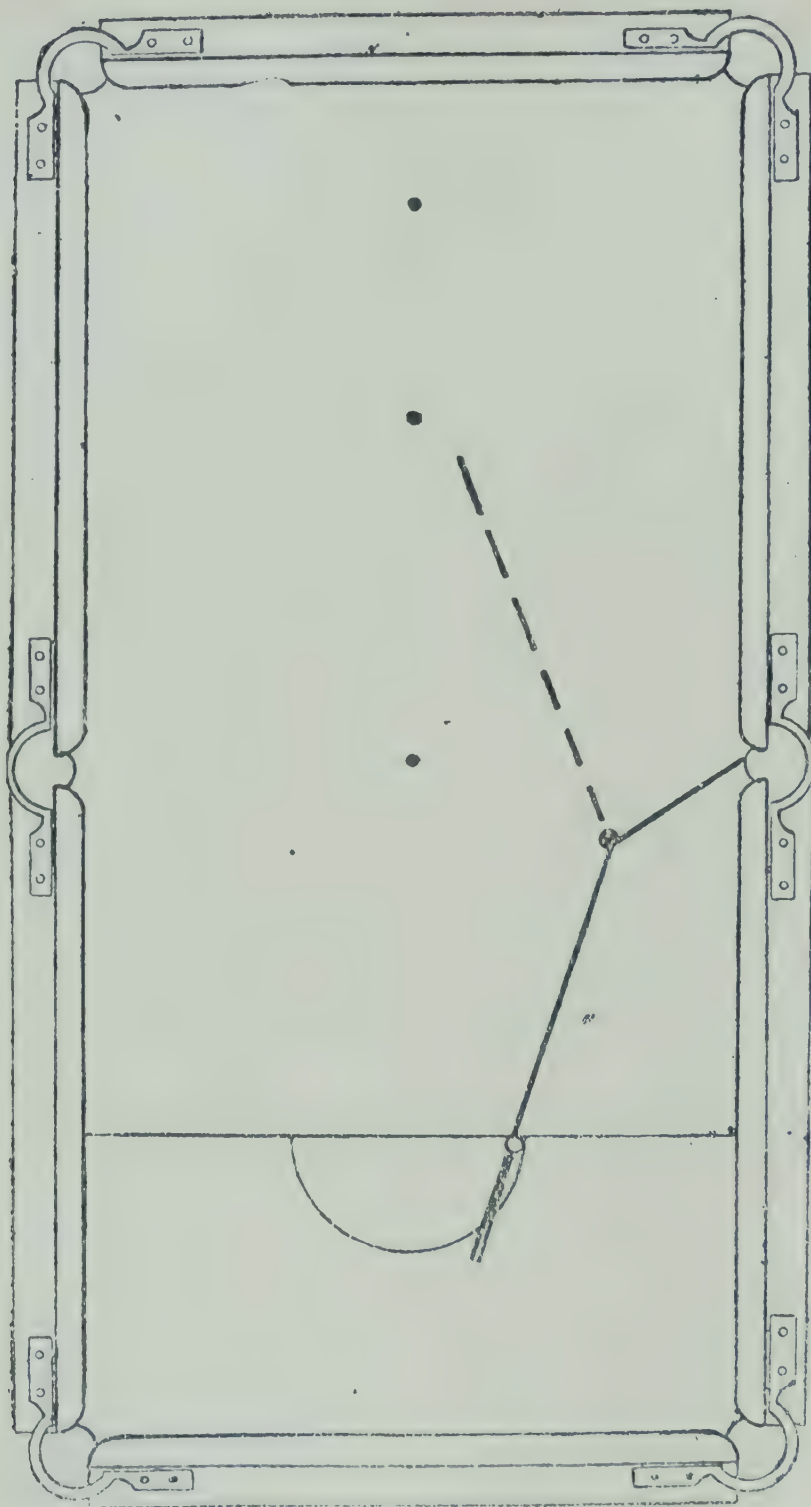


FIG. 101.—A gentle thin stroke putting the red ball out to the centre of the table.

the middle spot line, lying $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the side-cushion (see Fig. 100).

With the red ball placed as it is, I may play one of two kinds of losing hazards into the right middle pocket—either a thin or run-through one. The thin stroke, however, is the better suited to get the coloured ball to the middle of the table. It is a much more simple matter to just clip the red over between the centre spot and pyramid spot and find the pocket, than to drop half full upon it, driving it on to the upper side and top cushion. A stroke of that kind will keep the red ball too much to the side of the table, as you will find if you play it. Having decided upon the thin shot, I spot my ball in the right corner of the D, and applying no “side” to it make about a quarter-ball contact with the red ball. I play it very gently, directing the latter pretty well as I had intended, for its path is as shown by the dotted lines on Fig. 101. The measurements are 6 inches below pyramid spot line, and $28\frac{3}{4}$ inches from the right top-side cushion.

Now to Fig. 102, where it will be seen that I have two easy hazards left. Sticking to my advice that it is always better to play at the narrow side of the table for top-pocket losing hazards, when such, of course, are not unreasonably difficult, I do so again. It is well to remember that playing at the narrow or obtuse pockets when both top pockets are open to you, the object-ball, will more certainly be driven around to take the centre of the table. You avoid also any lurking dangers of its catching the shoulders of or falling into the pocket to which it is most closely located, mishaps that are ever occurring when the wider pocket is chosen. This rule of operating on the narrow pocket is one that is invaluable in tending to prolong a series of losing hazards. I

play, therefore, to the right top pocket from the extreme

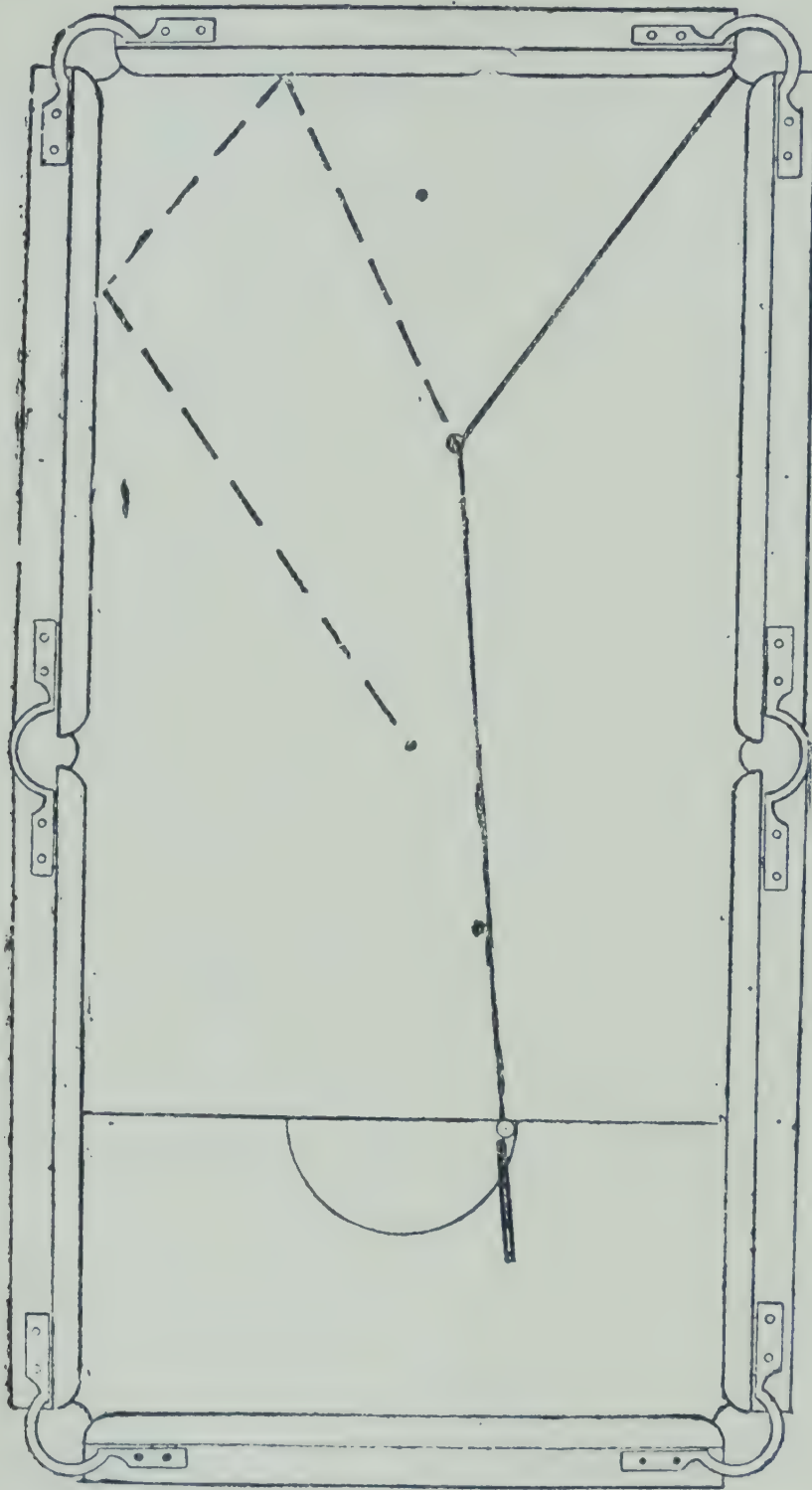


FIG. 102.—Losing hazard played at the narrowest pocket.

right of the D, using a little left “side” to, in some measure, counteract the rather obtuse angle and try to

cause a perfect half-ball impact at a nice pace between the balls. I make the stroke very well indeed, bringing the red ball from the top and left side cushions, to rest four inches above the middle spot in a direct line with the left top pocket, as illustrated.

Again, I have the two top pockets awaiting my pleasure, and again I select the narrower pocket of the two—the left one. This time the stroke is but a plain-ball one, in which I have to hit my ball high and freely to get sufficient run on the red to take it around the upper half of the table. I want it to return somewhere near to its original position right out in the centre of the table. The cue-ball is placed so as to make the angle between the objective points as equal as it is possible to do, and it is played from the rear of the extreme left of the baulk half-circle, as can be seen on the figure relating to this stroke. A very important matter is this equalization of distances between the cue-ball, object-ball, and pocket. Any one must know how difficult it is to gauge the correct angle for a long cannon when the first object-ball is close to the cue-ball. As it is with the cannon, so it is with the pocket. The more the player is able to keep a like distance intervening between the two points selected for the cue-ball to be directed to, the more certain will he be of making his stroke, particularly the long losing hazards. I attend to this detail, as I have said, by taking the cue-ball back as far as I am able to, while still preserving the half-ball angle to the left top pocket. A nice free swinging of the cue, to which preparatory movements of it are indispensable, and I send it forth at its fullest extent to make the stroke, letting the cue do the work entirely.

Flop! into the left top pocket the cue-ball goes cleanly

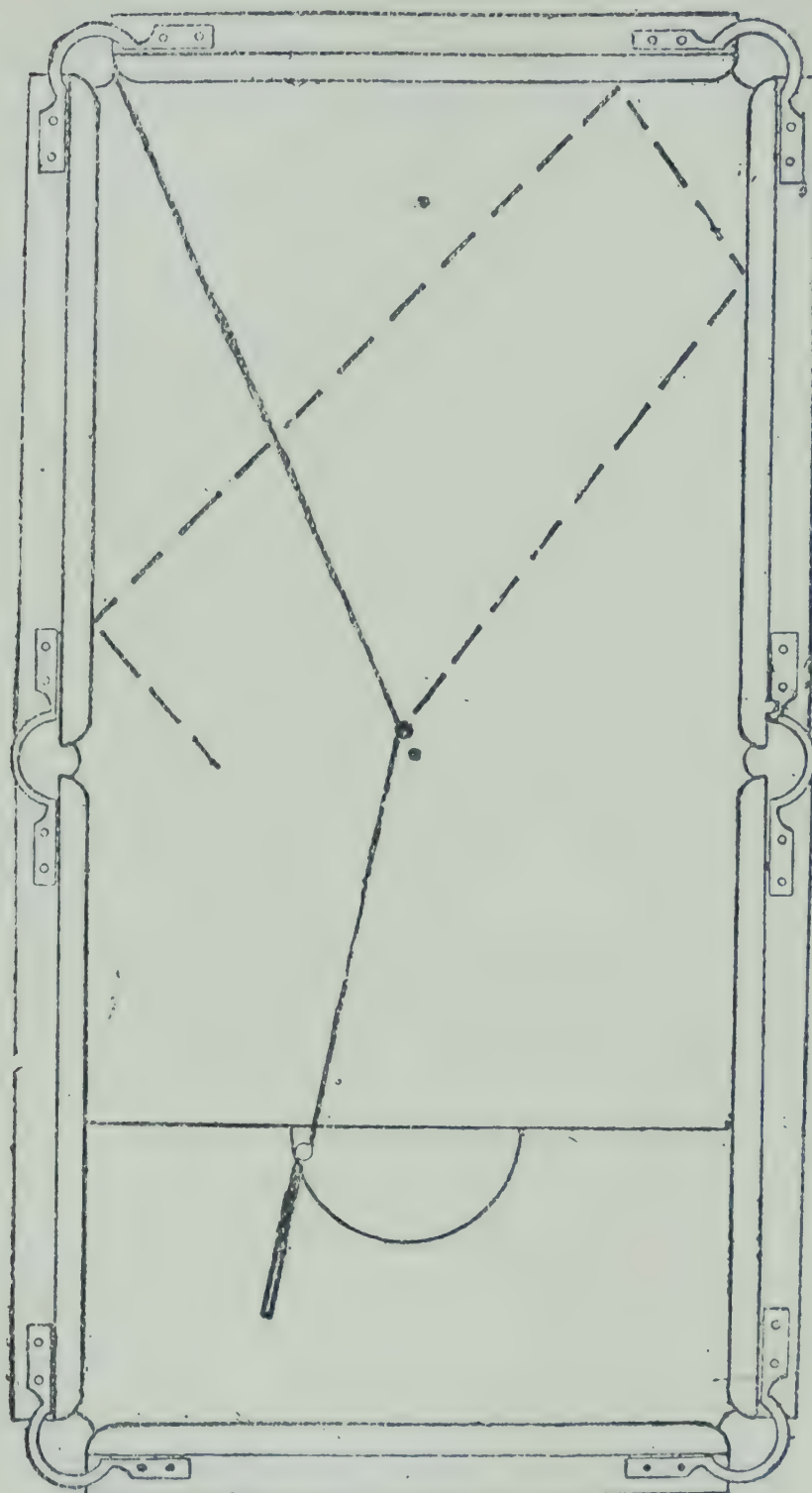


FIG. 103.—A freely played long half-ball "loser" at a narrow pocket.

and smartly, as all these forcible long half-balls will make it do, and the red ball takes all three upper cushions

(*vide* Fig. 103), to finally come to a standstill $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the middle-pocket line, and $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the left baulk side cushion. Its disposition proves that I did not put enough power into the stroke, for the object-ball has stopped far too much to the left side of the table to enable it to be called a good shot. However, the tremendous latitude for mistakes that losing hazards give to the player helps me out. I have the simplest of hazards into the left middle pocket "left on." And this I play with the idea of causing the red ball to take the top cushion, thence to return to the vicinity of the pyramid spot. But again I make a poor stroke. Catching the object-ball somewhat thinner than I intended doing, it is directed more to the right of the table, and lacks pace to come down to the pyramid spot line (see Fig. 104). Its actual stopping-place is 5 inches above the latter line and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches to the right of the table.

Now there is only one pocket—the right top one—available for my losing hazard. The placing of the red ball presents a rather peculiar shot to get into desirable position again. To have a half-ball angle, I should place the cue-ball on the left spot of the baulk half circle. But the ordinary half-ball stroke will not cope with the requirements of the case. It gives the player an easy shot, and that is all. The control of the red ball may easily be lost by playing the losing hazard in this fashion. So instead of disposing the cue-ball for the usual half-ball shot, I put it just an inch to the right of the left spot. To compensate for the wider angle and slightly thinner than half-ball contact I intend to make with the red, for the purpose of cutting it

around to the left top side cushion, I use right "side"

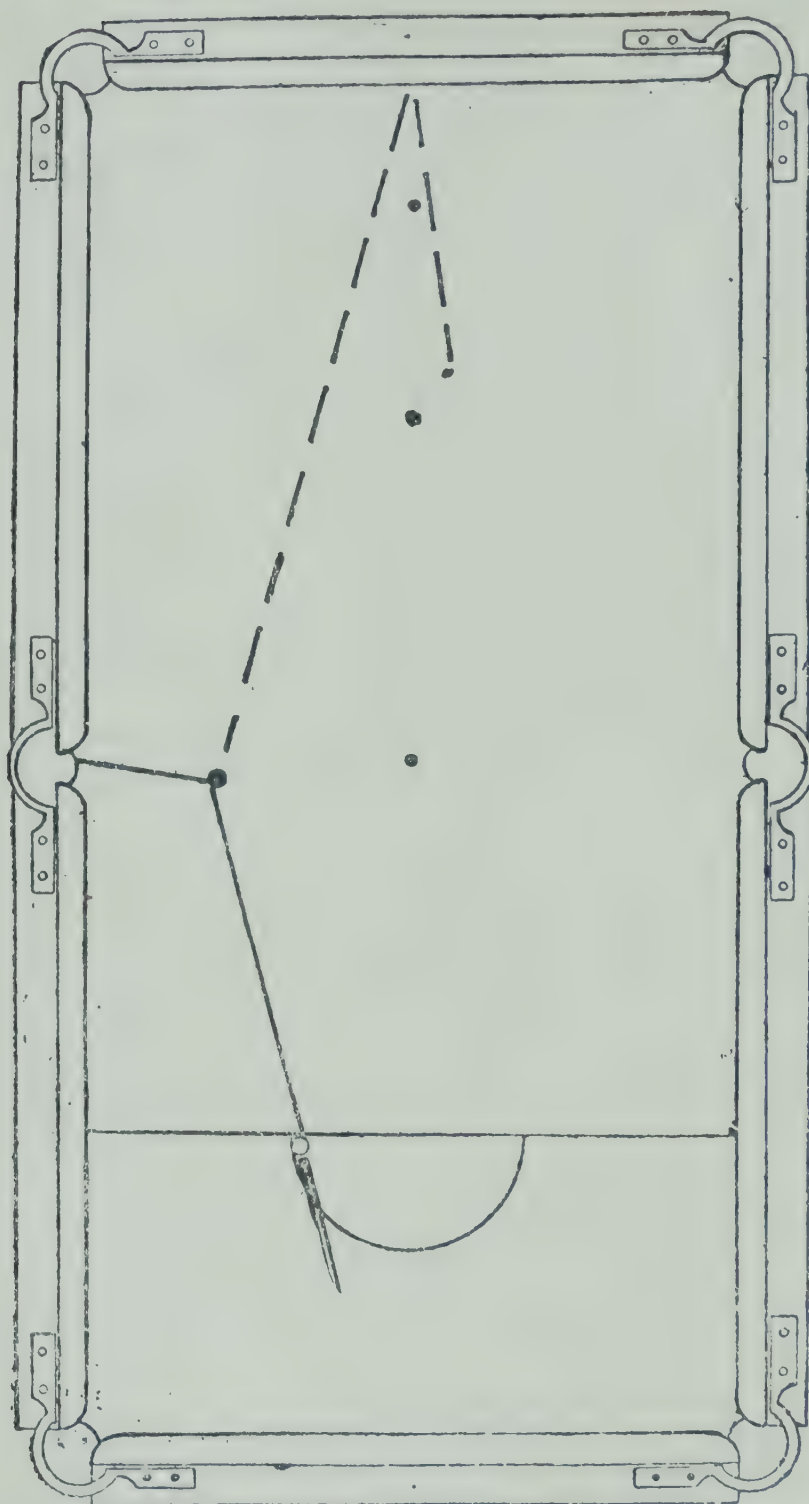


FIG. 104.—Poorly played "loser." The idea was to put the red ball in the centre of the table near the pyramid spot.

(a modicum of it) and a slight increase of pace, trying to direct the red as much as possible to the left side of

the table. The half-ball stroke would bring the red down the table in too straight a line. It would not take the side cushion soon enough to ensure its coming out to the centre of the table. Playing it as I do, however, slightly less than half-ball with some right "side," and slightly above medium pace (remember that being cut away over to the left top-side cushion the red has to travel much further than if it came obliquely down from the top cushion, as the plain half-ball stroke would cause it to do), the red ball works out, or should do, towards its definite resting-place in the middle of the board. But as I played it, however, it did nothing of the kind, for catching it too fully it comes almost out of play, a rather weak ending to the most difficult shot I have as yet had to play (see Fig. 105).

The red ball now lying awkwardly by the left middle pocket, I find that a square "screw" stroke into it is necessary. The cue-ball is placed on the central D spot, and enough force must be used to bring the red ball back and through baulk, keeping it as near as possible to the middle of the table during the whole of its running. No "side" is required, merely "screw." My idea is to work up to middle-pocket play, by taking the red a little less than three-quarter-ball; but I catch it too thickly, and do not send it sufficiently over to the right to get it into the middle of the table. Also, I do not play the stroke hard enough. As a consequence of these two faults, the coloured ball, though quitting the baulk sphere, only does so by $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches, measured in a direct line with, and of course, above, the left spot of the D—by no means a favourable position (see Fig.

106). The serviceable "short jenny"—that attractive

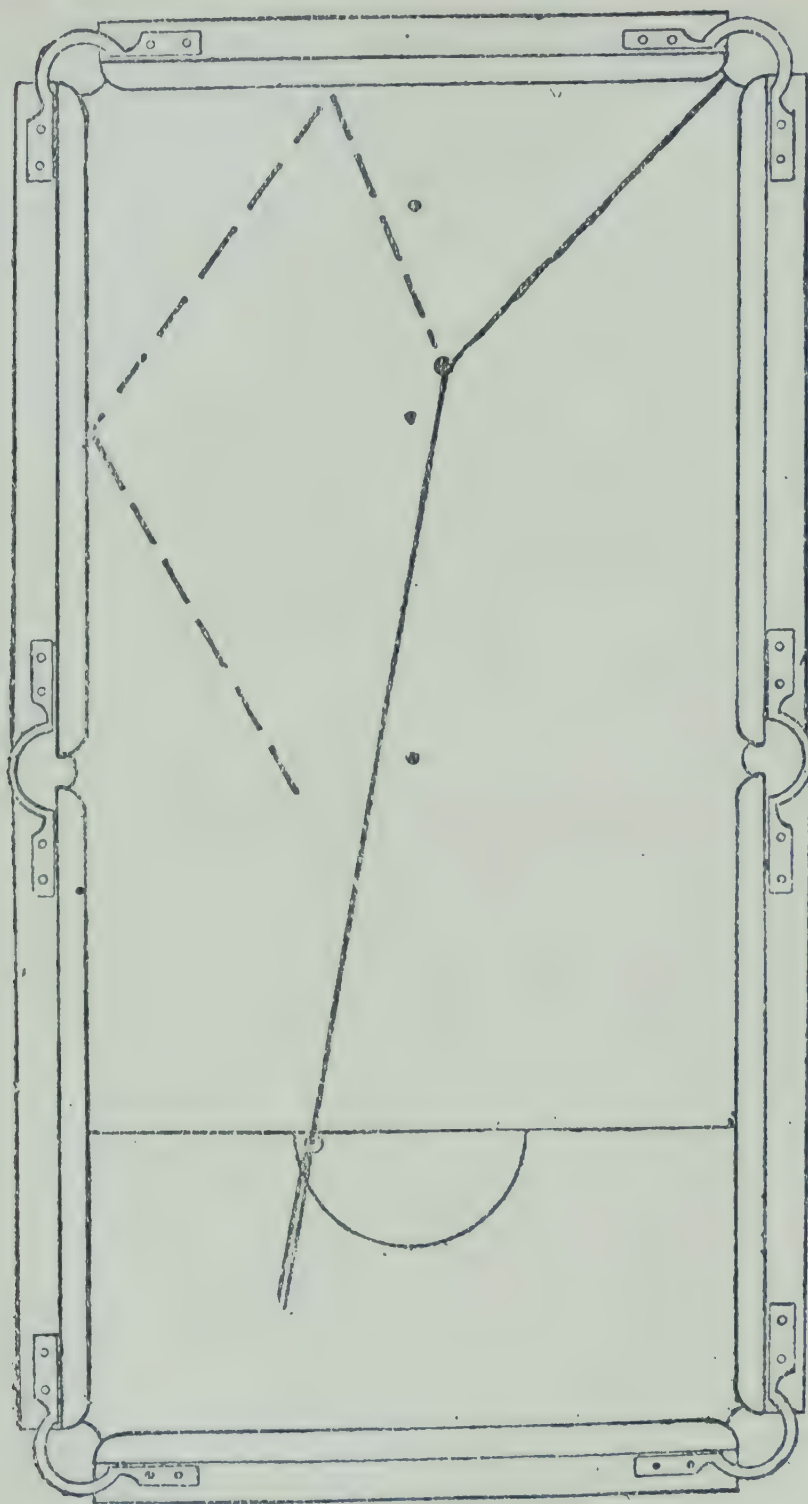


FIG. 105.—Cutting the red to the side of the table to bring it out to the centre again.

short range reverse "side" stroke—is what I must now have recourse to, both as a means of regaining more

open position for the object-ball and for a score. I place the cue-ball in the right-hand portion of the baulk half-

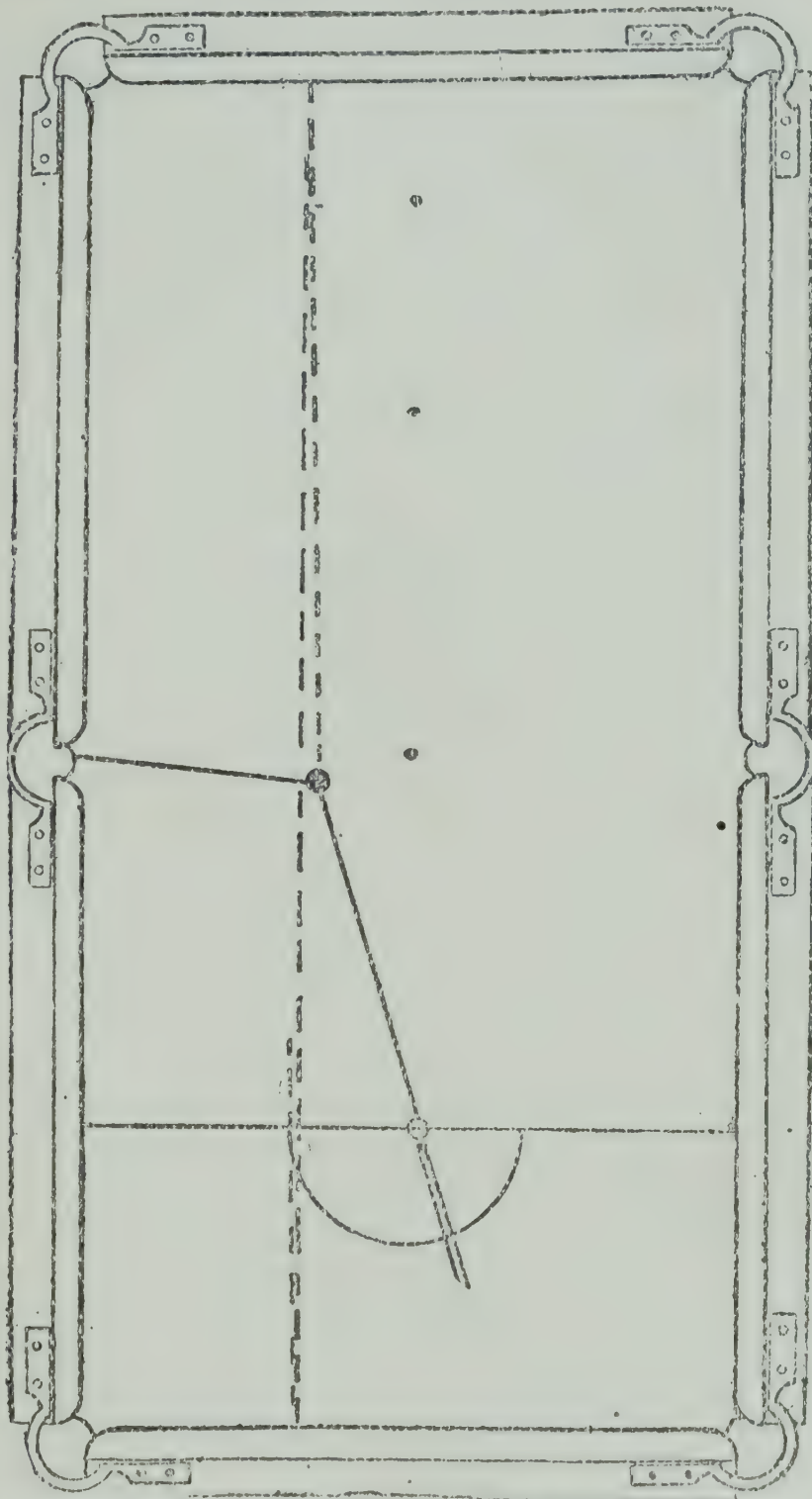


FIG. 106.—Doubling the red ball through baulk with a square "screw" shot.

circle to better gauge the angle of the stroke—the equalization of distance theory to which I have more

than once drawn attention—which I make slightly narrower than the natural half-ball one. This is necessary for the purpose of directing the red into the comfortable field of play. I have to take it more fully than half-ball—almost, if not quite, three-quarter-ball—to counteract the obtuse angle I have formed to the objective point—the left middle pocket. I rely upon the left “side” to pull the cue-ball into the pocket, and striking it low down—that is to say with “drag” and “side” to allow of no deviation of its course until it has struck the red ball—I go for the shot. The red is pretty accurately met by a ball that carries little more pace than is needed to take it over to the pocket. Then the “side” shows itself, and exerting its influence for the rest of the journey it curls the cue-ball on to the upper “shoulder” of the opening, which when met throws it back into the receptacle (see Fig. 107).

Meanwhile the red has been driven on to, and has rebounded from, the side cushion, to take up its position $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches above the baulk line, and 3 inches to the right of its left spot. Now I play a very gentle dribble into the same pocket, cutting the red out further to the middle of the table. No “side” is needed. One thing about the stroke, however, must be taken note of, that being the partiality of a very gently played ball in this and similar ones to pull away to above the upper “shoulder” of the pocket. Mention of this fact will doubtless recall frequently recurring failures of this kind to the minds of my readers. The cause of the deflection may be attributed to the friction of the cloth, and allowance must be made for it. Thus, to find a centre pocket with a very gently played thin contact ball, which has any

distance to travel between the object-ball and pocket,

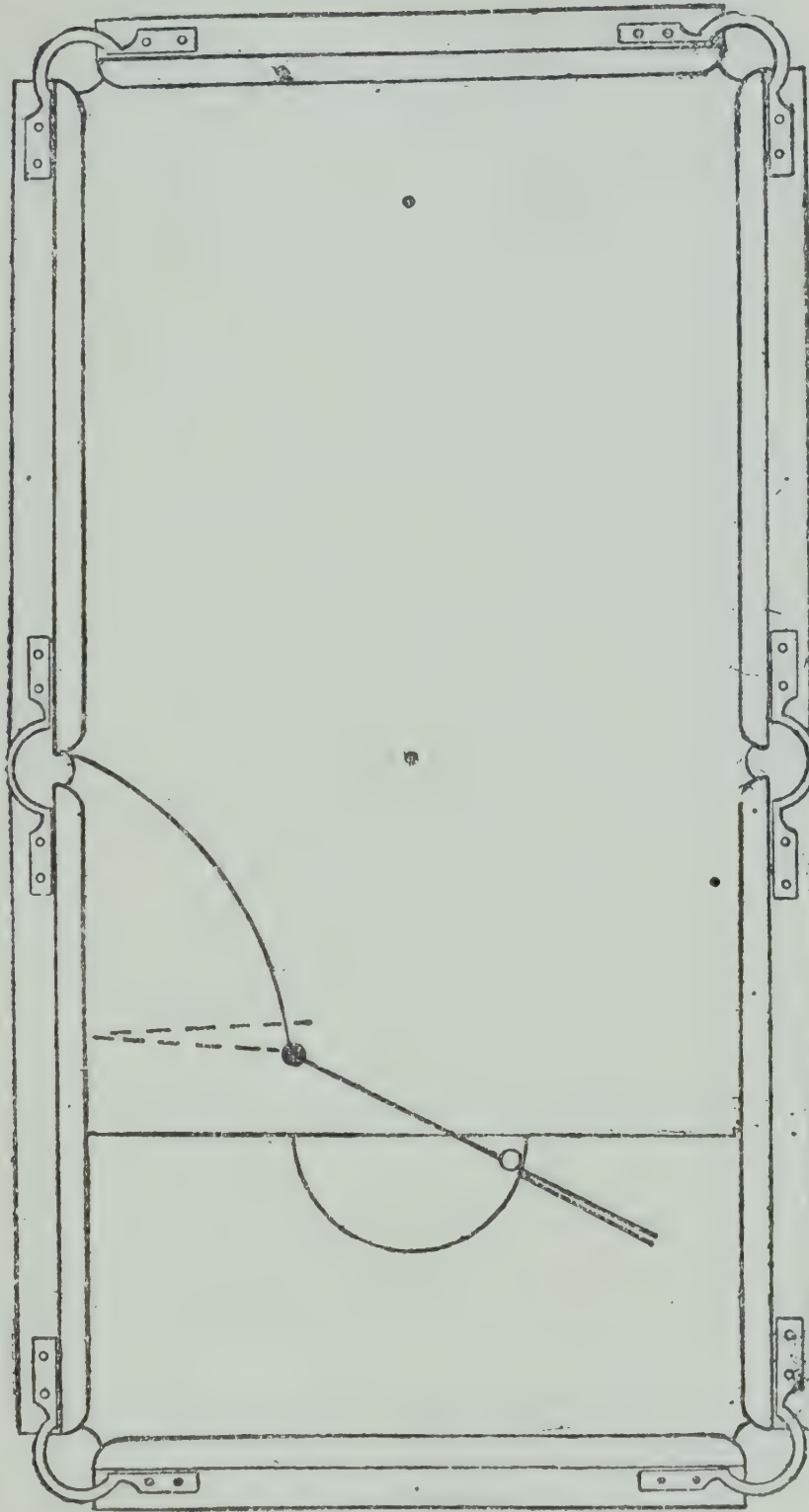


FIG. 107.—A short "jenny."

aim should be taken at the lower "shoulder." Try it and note the effect! I must mention that when playing

against the "nap" of the cloth, that is, towards baulk, and not from it as I am now doing, the cue-ball will

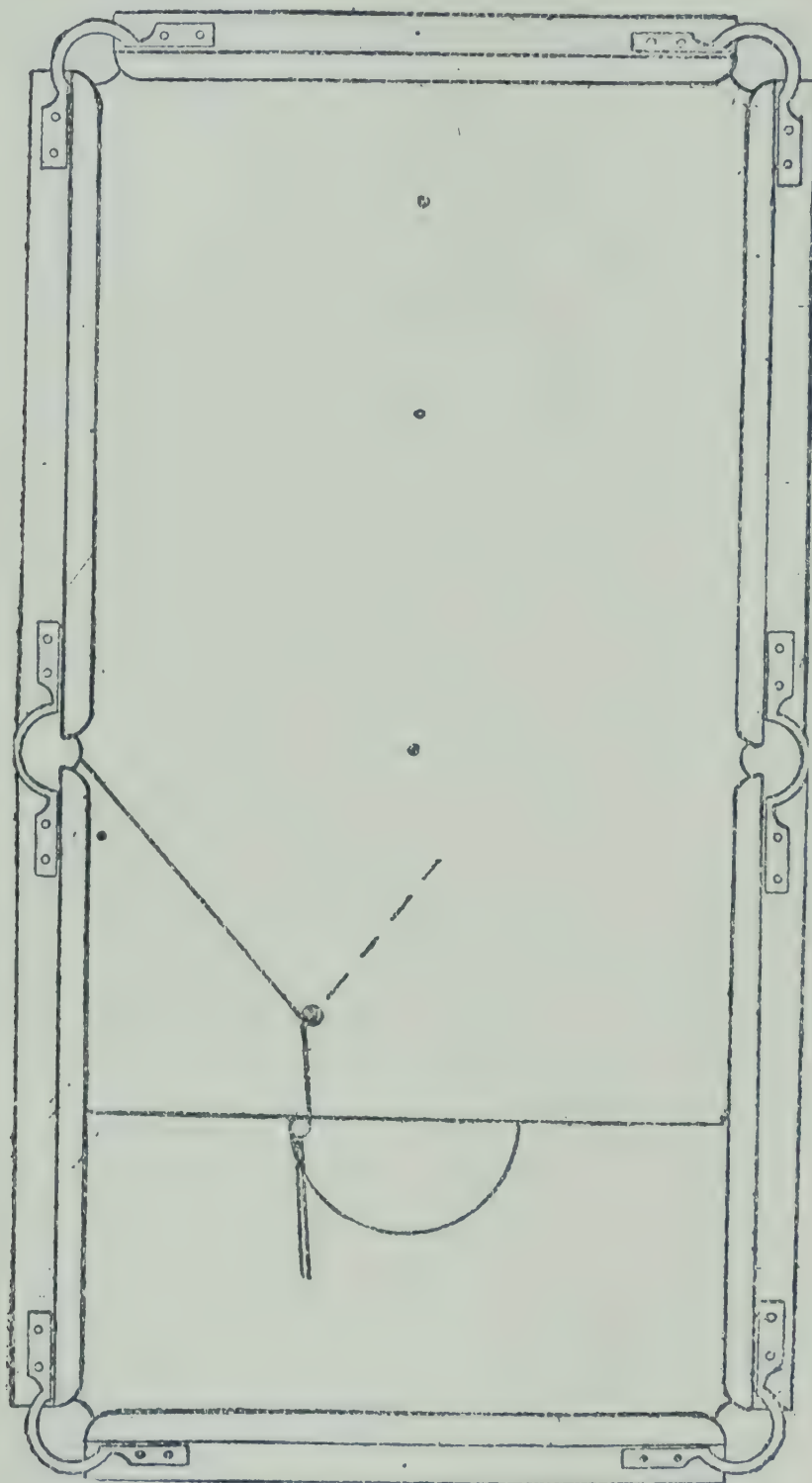


FIG. 108.—Dribbling gently in off the red.

drop away instead of pulling beyond its mark in the playing of this variety of stroke. Thus, to find the

centre of the pocket in the latter eventuality, the player must aim at the further "shoulder." It will be as well to experiment with this stroke also!

Playing from a little to the right of the left extremity of the D, my ball finds the left middle pocket, and the red is cut to $14\frac{1}{4}$ inches below the middle spot line a couple of inches to the right of the table (see Fig. 108). Now it is plain sailing, for the ensuing shot is merely a plain half-ball one, to form which angle the cue-ball is placed almost on the identical spot it occupied in the preceding stroke. I do not put quite enough pace into the shot, and though keeping the red in central line it comes $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the middle spot line, and $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches over to the right side of the table (see Fig. 109).

By reason of the object-ball having come so far down the table—its position leaves both top pockets open to me—I abandon my rule of playing for the most narrow top pocket. This rule there is no need to put in force when the object-ball is lying below the middle spot, for the latter must infallibly come around into good position if the hazard is played at proper strength. It must take the initial side cushion so far below the top pockets as to ensure (from a half-ball stroke, of course) its getting into a course that will bring it out to the middle of the table again. So on this principle I can play at a very open pocket—the left top one. I again go as nearly as possible to equalizing the intervening space between the two objective points—object-ball and pocket—to gain the best focus of the natural angle—the stroke that I aim for—by placing my ball at the base of the D, as Fig. 110 will go to show. Playing the free stroke that the long half-ball losing hazard demands, I find the

pocket in undoubtedly lucky style—just as badly as I could without having actually failed to score. The

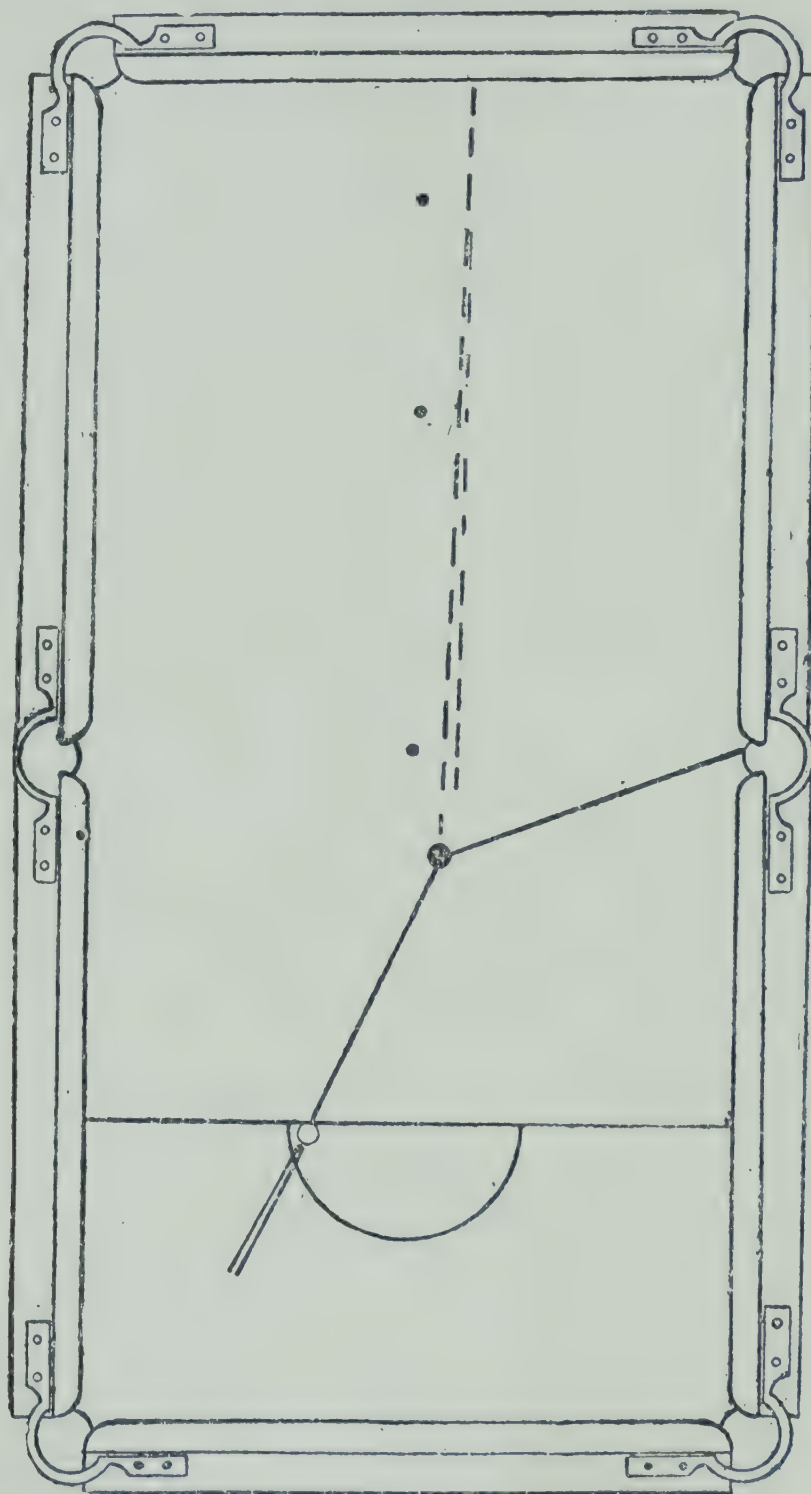


FIG. 109.—Plain half-ball stroke.

contact with the red ball was much too thick, and it was sent so far up the right top-side cushion that it

ultimately came to an anchorage, after nearly catching in the jaws of the left middle pocket, $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches away

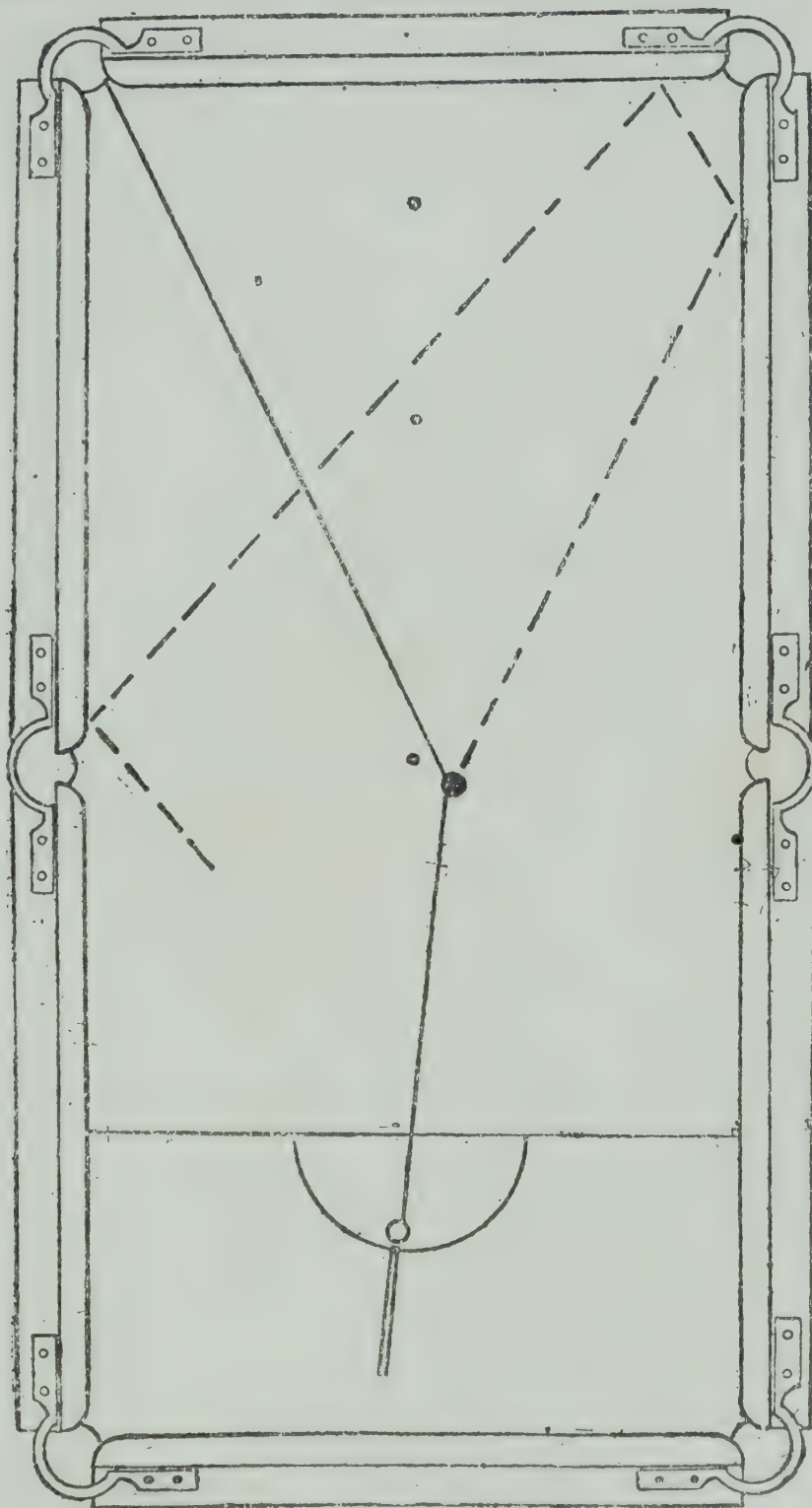


FIG. 110.—Freely played long half-ball losing hazard.

from the left baulk cushion, and $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the middle spot line.

The next stroke shown is the red winning hazard into the left middle pocket. This I play with the intention of leaving myself a losing hazard in the further corner pocket—the right top one—from the subsequently spotted red ball—a stroke that most amateurs know. Though they know it, they seldom select the best possible position for the cue-ball. This comes in the train of making a direct straight stroke on the red, sending the cue-ball, as it follows the disappearing object-ball, either actually into the pocket (to make a six shot, thus losing position) or to catch in the jaws of it and come awkwardly from them, or to run a few inches above the pocket under the side cushion. When the latter happening comes to pass a very good stroke is required to bring off the “loser” from the spotted red ball, to say nothing of the added drawback in having to play from under a cushion.

Placing the cue-ball in a direct line with the object-ball and centre of pocket is *not* the way the professional players make their middle pocket winning hazards when getting into position for the losing hazard off the spotted red ball. They infinitely prefer to make the winning hazard slightly more difficult than the straight-away one. But what extra difficulty they encounter is compensated for by the better and more certain after-position. By placing the cue-ball a little to the left of the direct line of passage, or to the right of it, according to the respective middle pockets into which they are intent upon inserting the red ball, the cue-ball is bound to keep a respectable distance from the side cushion.

Fig. III gives a fair sample of this kind of stroke. It often induces a forcible losing hazard, but that is

decidedly easier than a thin stroke from under a cushion.

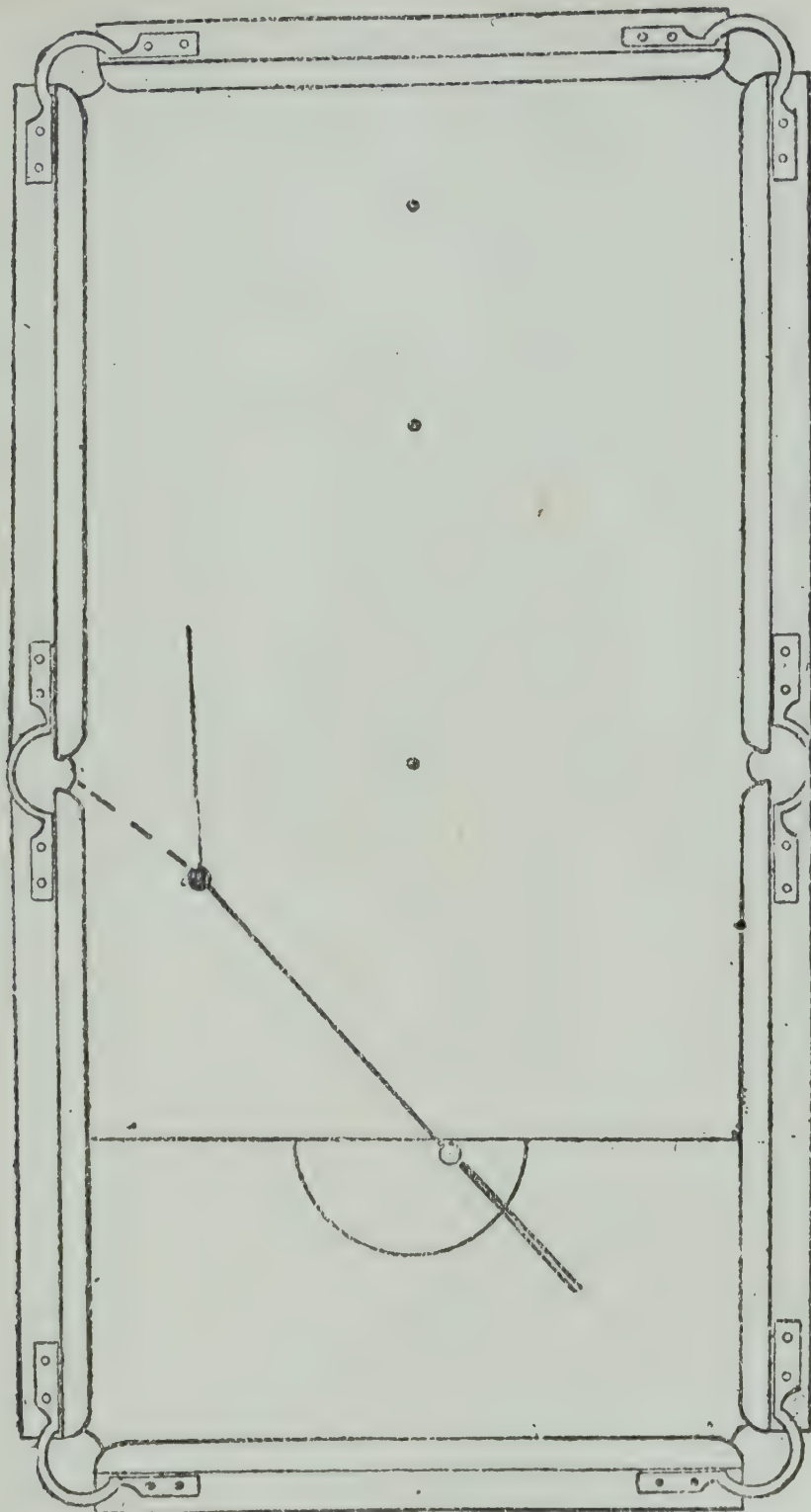


FIG. III.—Putting in the red, leaving position for a losing hazard when it comes up on the billiard spot.

The reason that a forcing stroke frequently needs negotiation is accounted for by the tendency of the

cue-ball to keep wider than the natural angle line to the red. On more than one occasion I have stated that this is from a line drawn from the upper shoulder of the middle pockets to the centre of the spotted red ball. Narrower than that a thin, run-through, or swerving ball shot is needed, and wider than that a forcing "side," or screw stroke, when the losing hazard is at all possible.

However, in the position that I have to deal with it, I play according to the best accepted method. Arranging my ball so that it falls a trifle to the left of the direct object-ball and pocket-line, I go for the winning hazard, using a little right "side" to further assist in keeping my ball away from the cushion. Dropping the red in the pocket, my ball travels a little way ahead after making a kind of half-run-through the object-ball. It stops 17 inches above the middle spot line, and is $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches from the left top-side cushion. As will be seen, the natural angle position has not been found, but, being in the open field of play, much may be done with the cue-ball with a safety that could not be assured when very close to a cushion.

The losing hazard is, as I am left, a very simple one. Being so close to the red ball I am enabled to play it slowly, using running—right—"side" to allow for the somewhat wide angle. The employment of running "side" will be found very advantageous in such strokes, when the angle is not too wide a one and the cue-ball lies well above the middle of the table and away from the cushions.

In playing this losing hazard I aim for a slightly fuller contact than half-ball with the red, which I try to bring a little below the pyramid spot. I really try for a

half-ball contact, and the slightly fuller aim is made to counteract the effect of the bit of right "side" I use. This, as I have before said, acts previous to, as well as after, contact with the object-ball, though in much less degree. Dropping on the red very slowly it is evident that I have caught it a trifle fuller than I had intended, for it stops 17 inches below the pyramid spot line and 6 inches to the right side of the table, instead of keeping to its central line (see Fig. 112).

Still, both pockets remain open for my inevitable losing hazard. As usual I elect to play at the most narrow one—the right corner one. Spotting my ball on the right extremity of the D, and imparting a fair amount of left "side" and pace to my ball, I play half-ball on the red to try and bring it around the table to between the centre pockets. It stops after running, as Fig. 113 shows, 18 inches below the middle of the table and $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches to the right of it.

Now I find that I have the choice of two kinds of stroke into the right middle pocket, a very slow ball, or a moderate pace run-through. The first is the easier, in the making of which it is the game to dribble the red over towards, but not above the pyramid spot. This stroke, however, will only lead up to top-pocket play. As middle-pocket operations are eminently more favourable to the losing-hazard game, simple though top-pocket work is, I do not hesitate to adopt the alternative, the medium-pace stroke. It is better-class billiards in which, as all no doubt know, one has to take certain risks to bring about the most favourable results. But this medium pace run-through is not so very difficult after all. An hour or two spent upon such shots will

speedily make the average player fairly proficient in

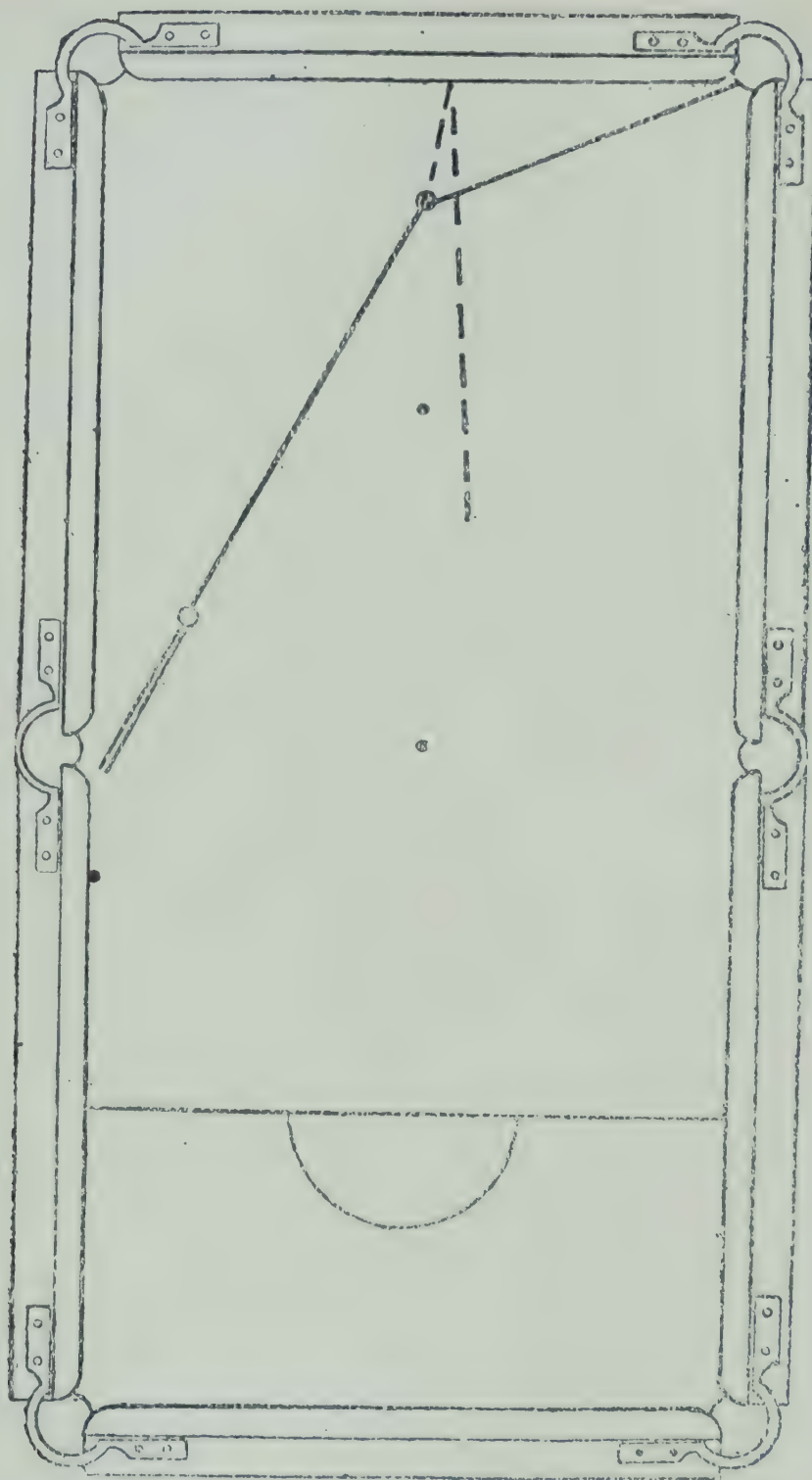


FIG. 112.—Half-top-pocket stroke with right "side."

them. There can be no mistaking the angle at which the cue-ball has to be placed. The two things—the

hazard and after-position of the object-ball—really work automatically together.

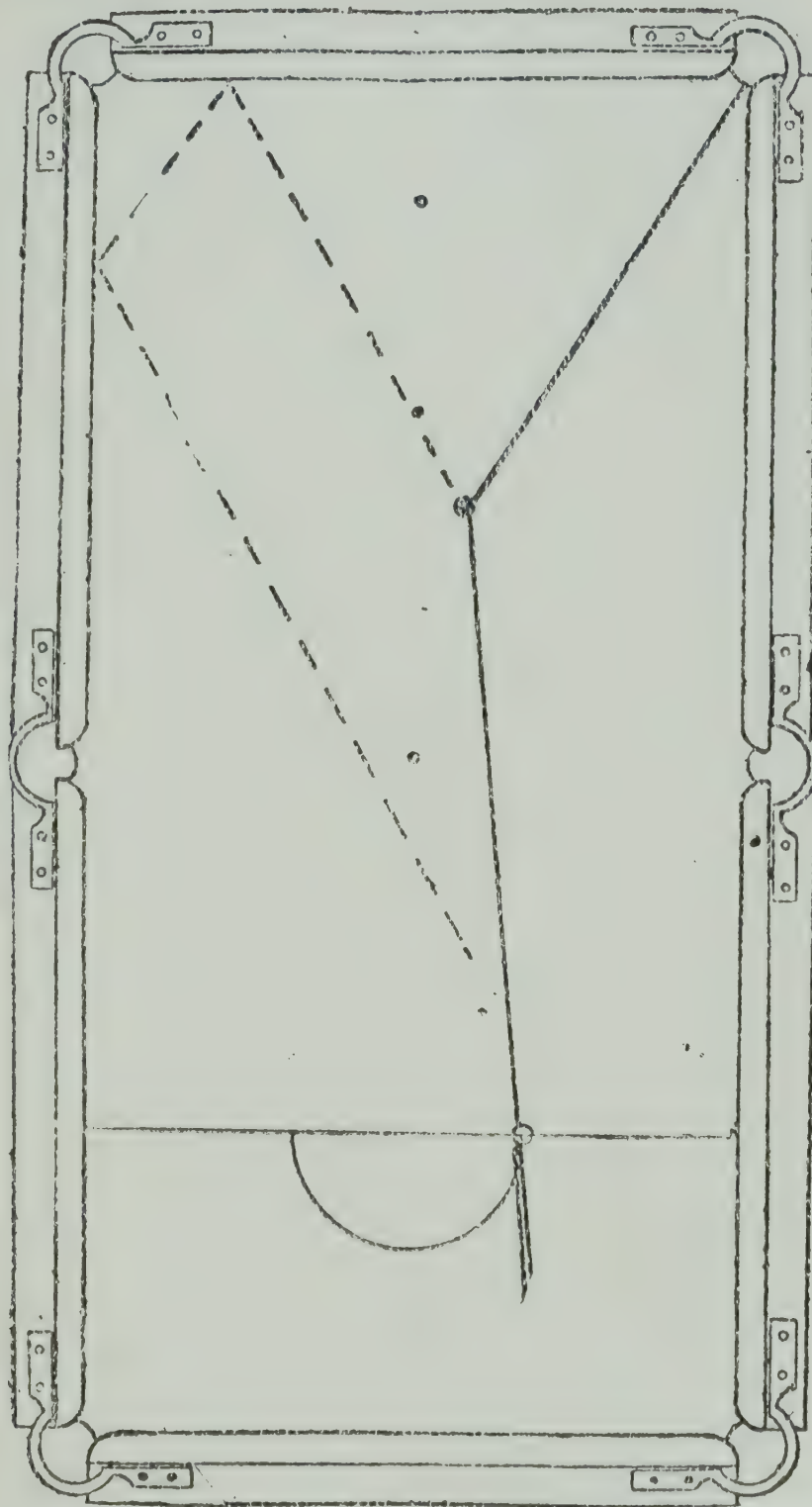


FIG. 113.—Driving the red around into position between the middle pockets.

The stroke on Fig. 114 presents an extremely luminous example of this fact. My ball is put in the middle

of the baulk half-circle and within a couple of inches of

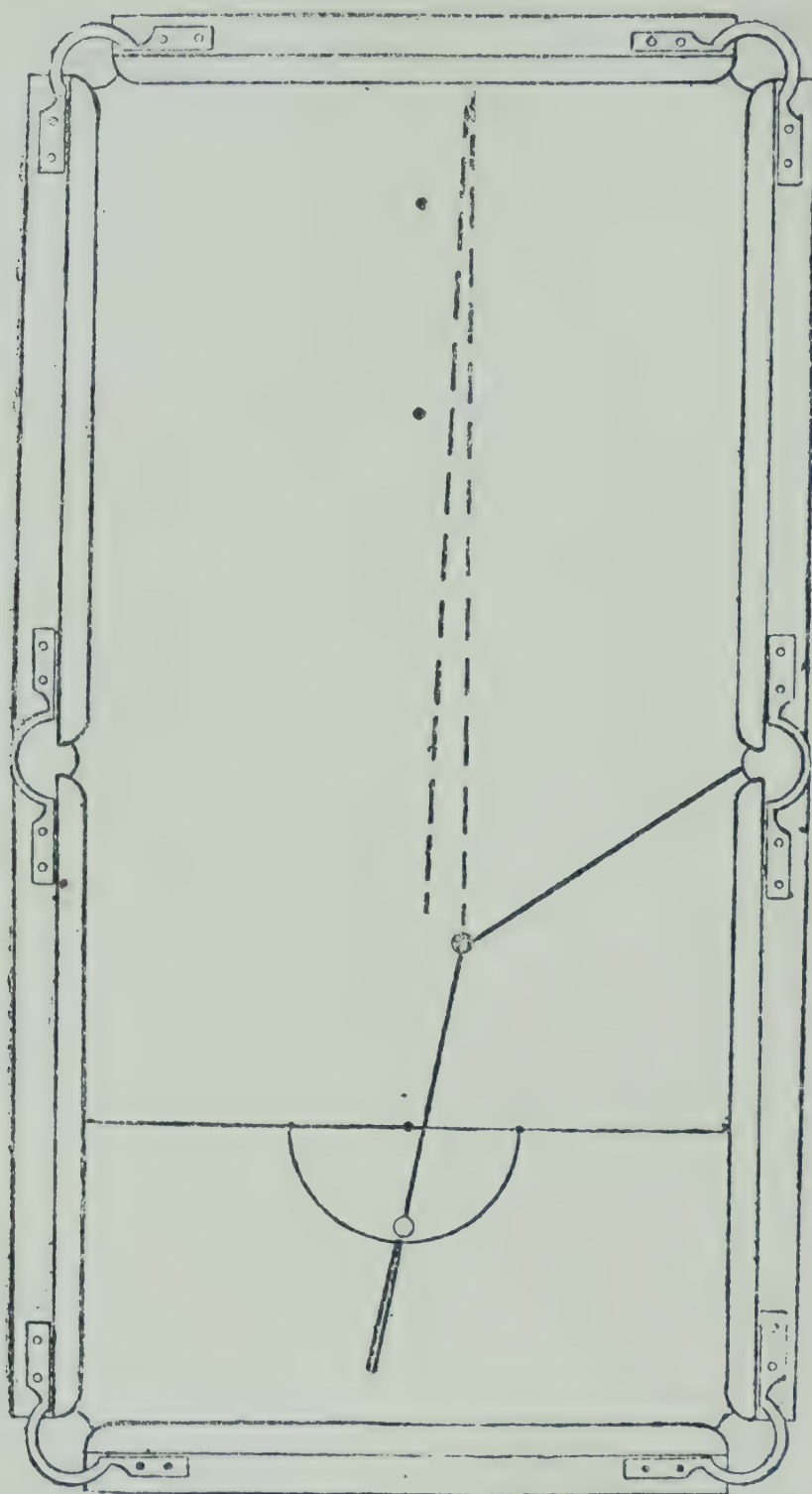


FIG. 114.—Run-through stroke, keeping the object-ball in the middle of the table.

its base, as the equalization of distance theory between the objective points prompts me to do, to better gauge

the angle. Now I will ask my readers whether any but such an approximate angle as I have here formed between balls and pocket can compass the two requisites of the stroke—the making of the losing hazard into the right middle pocket, and the keeping of the red ball to the middle of the table, the very life and soul of losing-hazard play. Put the ball up on the table, according to the measurements, and see the thing for yourselves.

Playing for the stroke, I make a three-quarter-ball contact with the red, up the centre of the board goes the latter, and into the pocket falls the cue-ball. The red stops 21 inches below the middle of the table and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches to the right of it (see Fig. 114).

Again I have an optional losing hazard in either of the middle pockets left “on.” I pick the broadest pocket—the left one—and try to play a thick-contact stroke on the red to make it return from the top cushion. This is merely a plain-ball shot, with the cue-ball placed well to the right-hand extremity of the D. The chief merit of the losing-hazard game—the chance it gives to very badly played strokes, badly played as far as the player’s direction of the object-ball is concerned, though, at the same time, strokes that compass the actual intended score—will once more be demonstrated by the manner in which I play this left middle-pocket “loser.” Of course I play it on the lines that I have always laid down, simply to bring, or rather to keep, the object-ball in the middle of the table, up to and from its return by the top cushion. How poorly I play the stroke the figure will tell. Instead of getting nearly three-quarter full on the red I make a half-ball shot, and as a consequence it goes over to the right side of the table. It

is absolutely out of play—that is as regards any possible chance of making losing hazards off it—all the way back to the right middle pocket, over which it most luckily stops, from the moment it struck the top cushion. Intentionally done, as very many amateur players do, this would have been the most feeble and unsound game imaginable. Contrast it with a keeping of the object-ball in the middle of the table, where all the while you will have at least two pockets open for your losing hazard—the two top ones. The point that the red ball rests upon as it stops running from my bad shot is $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches exactly from the centre of the right middle pocket (see Fig. 115).

Here there is another optional stroke. I can play one of two ways on the red, fine or full. More than once during the course of these lessons I have called attention to the difficulty of getting any desired position of the object-ball by a fine or thin stroke. Not only that, but also the fact that by its slight contact little or no pace is taken out of the cue-ball, and it has to enter the pocket at a high rate of speed. Therefore the thin stroke possesses two defects as compared with the thicker contact or run-through stroke. The latter ensures greater certainty of giving the desired “strength” to the object-ball, and, further, by reason of the full impact between the balls, the cue-ball is enabled to take the pocket at a considerably slower pace than in the thin contact stroke. It means much this taking the pace out of the cue-ball in these kind of middle-pocket shots, for there are always these projecting “shoulders” to be taken into account. Let the high-speed ball, such as comes with the thin-contact stroke, catch one or other

of them, and the losing hazard is almost certain to be

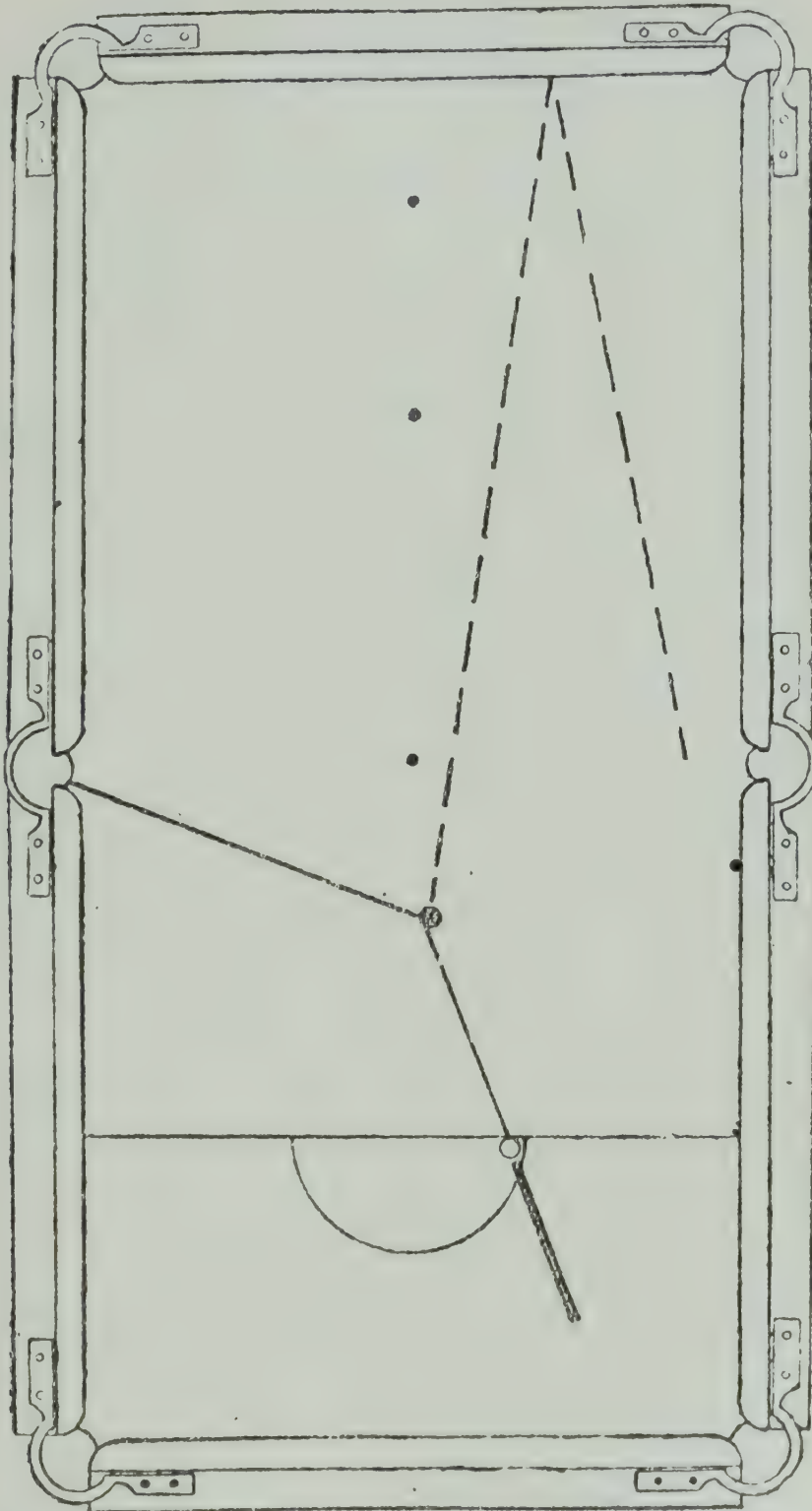


FIG. 115.—Badly played “loser.” Object-ball sent to the side of the table instead of being kept to the centre.

missed. On the other hand, the slow running ball always

has a chance of finding the pocket, even though it also

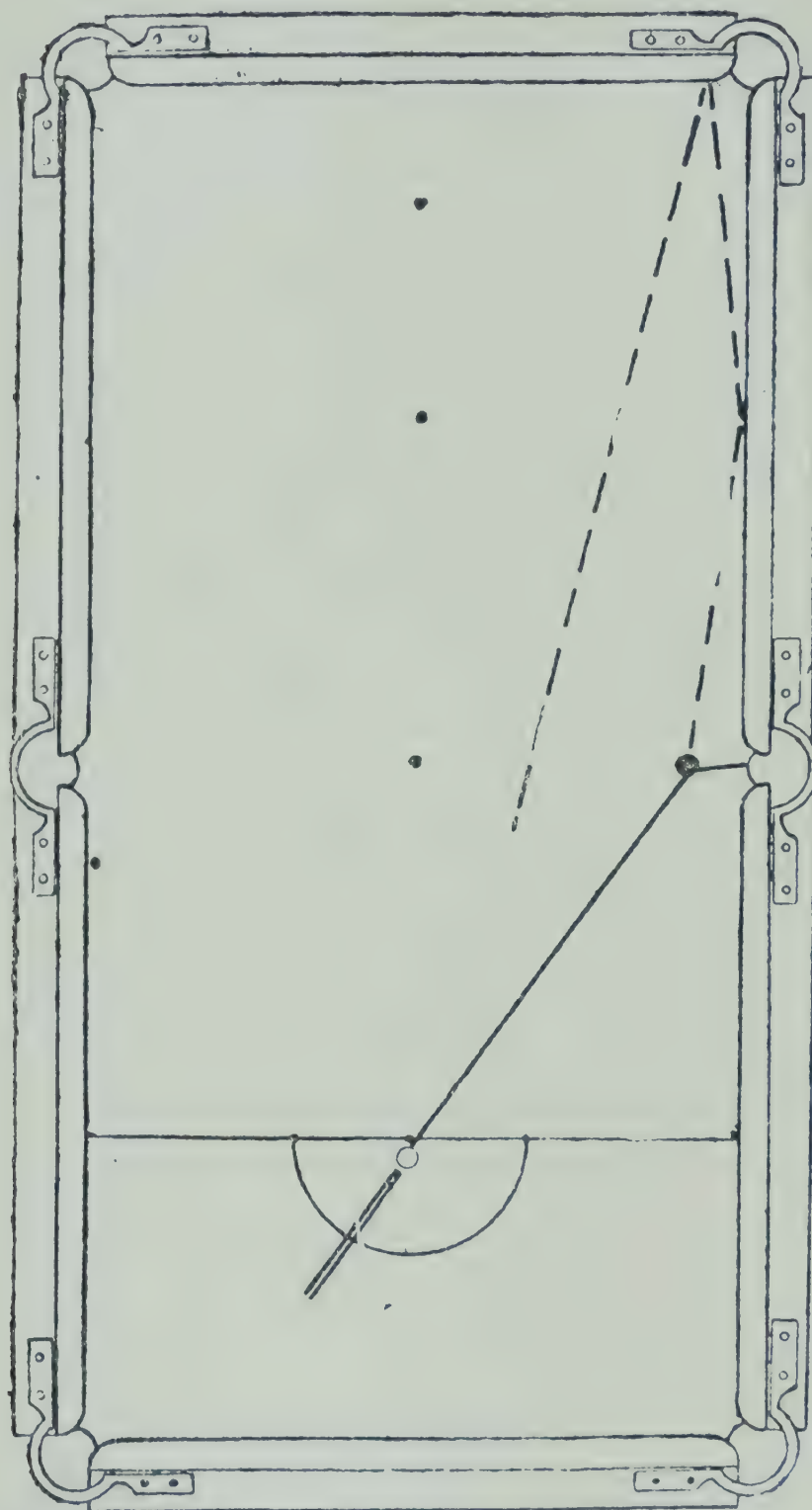


FIG. 116.—Thick contact stroke driving object-ball out towards centre of table off two cushions.

first touches a pocket "shoulder." So taking advantage

of the more secure stroke I elect to play the run-through "loser."

I try to make the red ball strike as nearly as possible midway along the right top-side cushion, which will give it the necessary direction to come between the two middle pockets after its return down the table. As it turns out, I cut it too much towards the top pocket, and it does not come so well off the top cushion as it might have done. It stops $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the centre spot and 24 inches from the right baulk pocket, leaving me a losing hazard into the right middle pocket (see Fig. 116). To get this I put the cue-ball well over to the left of the D, playing a fine stroke and using a fair amount of right-hand "side," which assists in the making of the hazard. The red ball must be taken rather fine to steer it to the central line of the board. I make the hazard almost too thinly, and leave the coloured ball much further over to the left side of the table than I had intended to. Its position now is exactly 12 inches below the pyramid spot line and 7 inches to the left of it (see Fig. 117). This placing leaves me in command of the top pockets.

I could, if I chose, make pretty certain of the losing hazard into the left corner pocket. But as I can only make it by playing slowly with right "side" (and thus giving the "side" an opportunity of making its presence felt), a shot which is bound to take the red out of the field of play, I adopt the palpable alternative. Before dealing with this, I should like to remark that unless a nice bit of pace can be imparted into losing-hazard strokes of the kind now under notice, "position" will assuredly be lost. The left top pocket stroke is such a comparatively narrow one, and necessitates the employment

of so much "side," that a minimum of pace is bound to

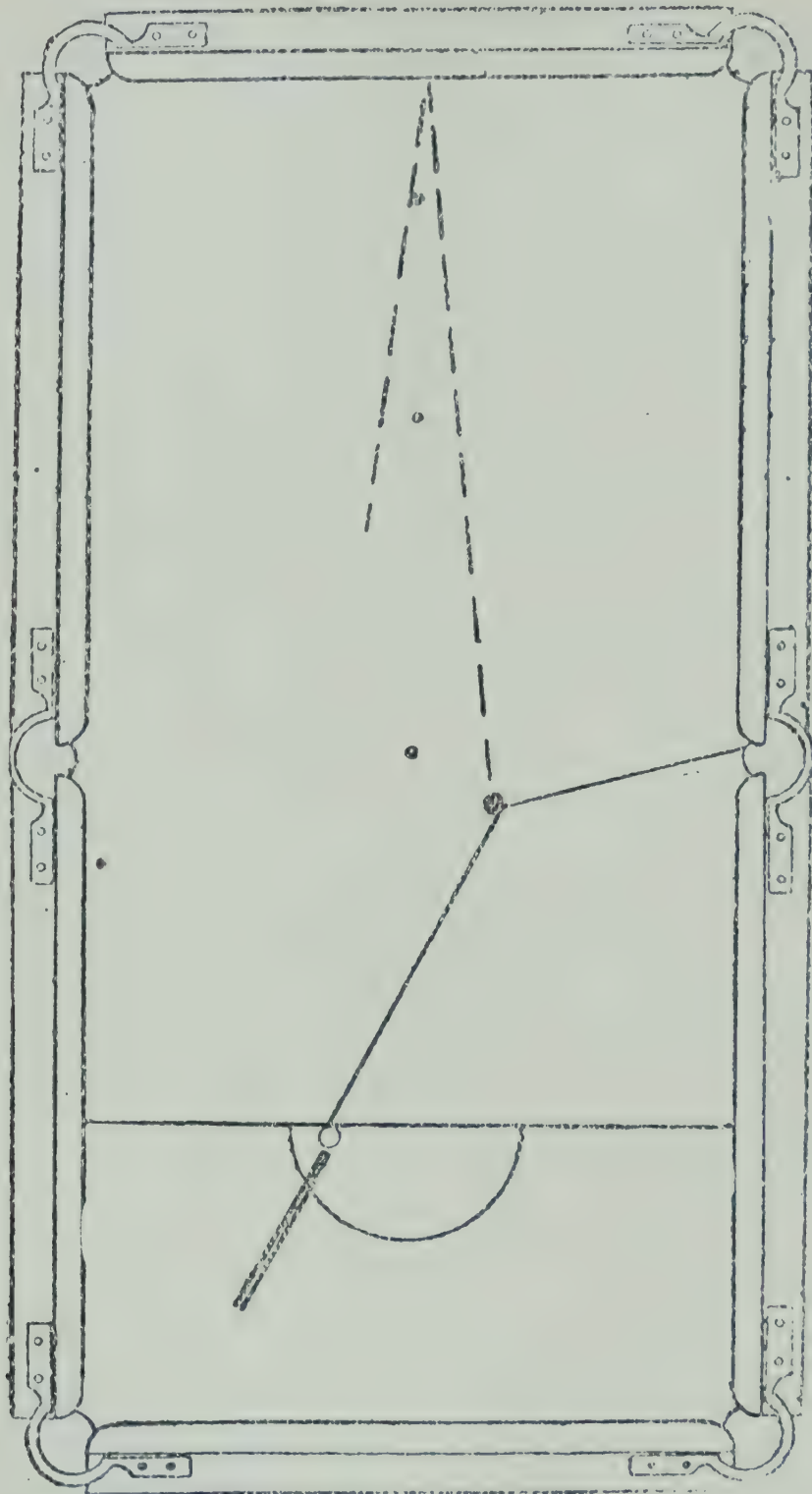


FIG. 117.—Thinnish stroke using right "side." Object-ball sent too much to the left side of the table.

follow. And this does not fit in (as the red ball is now

placed) with a continuity of losing hazards from "hand." I cannot "leave" the object-ball for an ensuing hazard, and I am bound to look to the right top pocket to supply the missing link—the giving of a desirable passage to the object-ball. In playing at this pocket I have to try and avoid the red getting thrown out of its course by a contact with the angles of the left top pocket. This causes me for the first time in all of my strokes upon the red ball to abandon the stereotyped "game"—the leaving of the object-ball in the middle of the table. I am forced to discard it in this instance, or I would not. All that I can safely play for is to bring the red up to the left middle pocket for either a winning or a losing hazard therein. A plain half-ball medium-pace stroke transports the red ball to 3 inches above the middle of the table line and $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the left top side cushion (see Fig. 118).

The red ball allows of either a "long jenny" into the left top pocket or a screw losing hazard into the middle pocket. There is always such a difficulty attendant upon the playing of "long jennies" in the matter of leaving the object-ball favourably that I choose the middle pocket hazard. It supplies a nice example of the "double-strength" stroke, when the object-ball is made to strike the upper side cushion a foot or two beyond the pocket. As often as not it will be found to have returned almost to the identical spot whence it was played, after it has passed through baulk, as the dotted lines on Fig. 119 will go to show. I do not use much screw, but make the angle into the pocket by the use of plenty of pace. For it requires a strong stroke to direct the object-ball around the table—good three-quarter

pace, in fact. I play the hazard by placing my ball

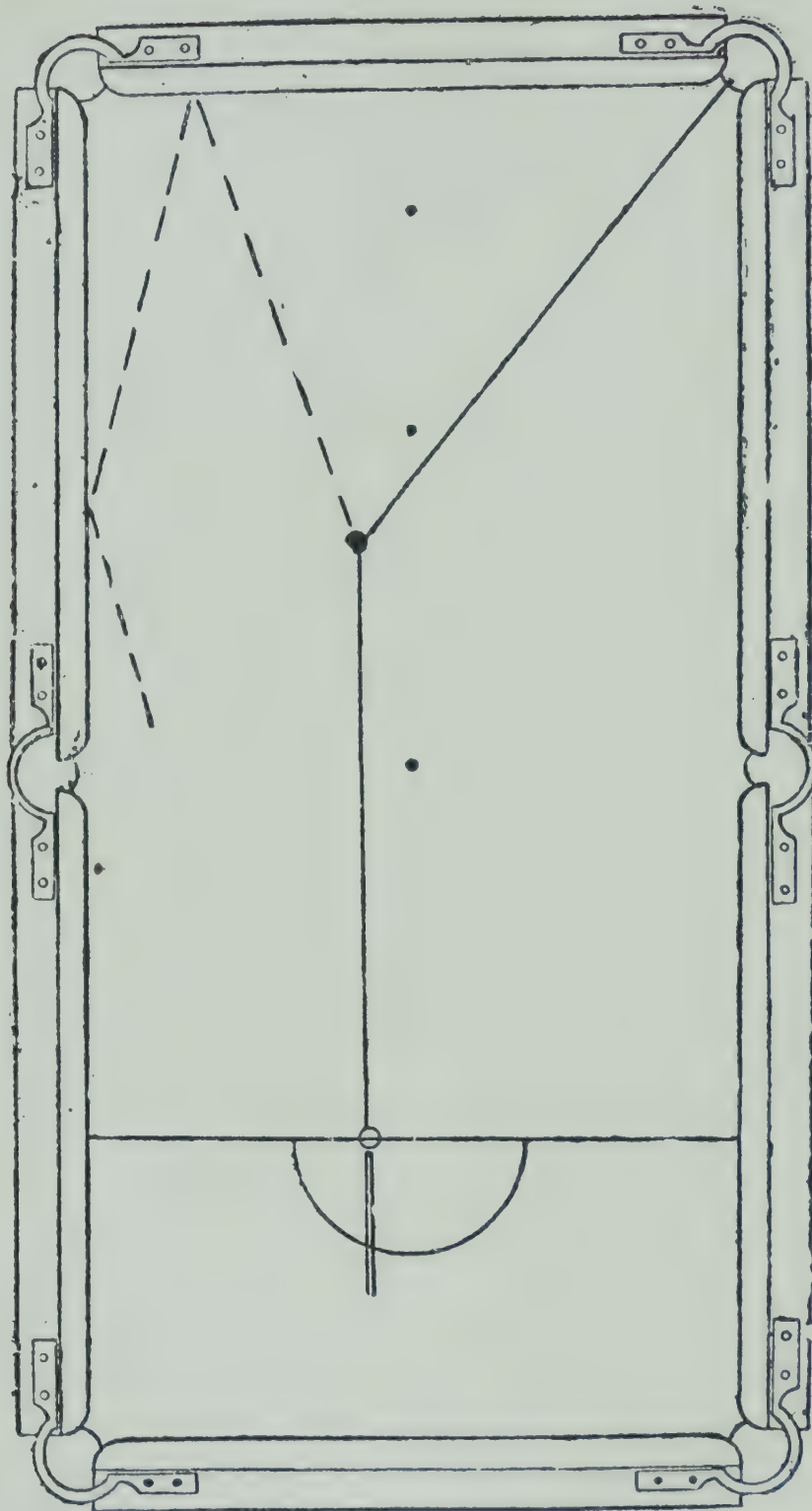


FIG. 118.—An exception to the losing-hazard rule. Playing to leave the object-ball over *one* pocket.

well over to the right of the D, and, making it, I bring

the object-ball to a point $10\frac{3}{4}$ inches below the middle

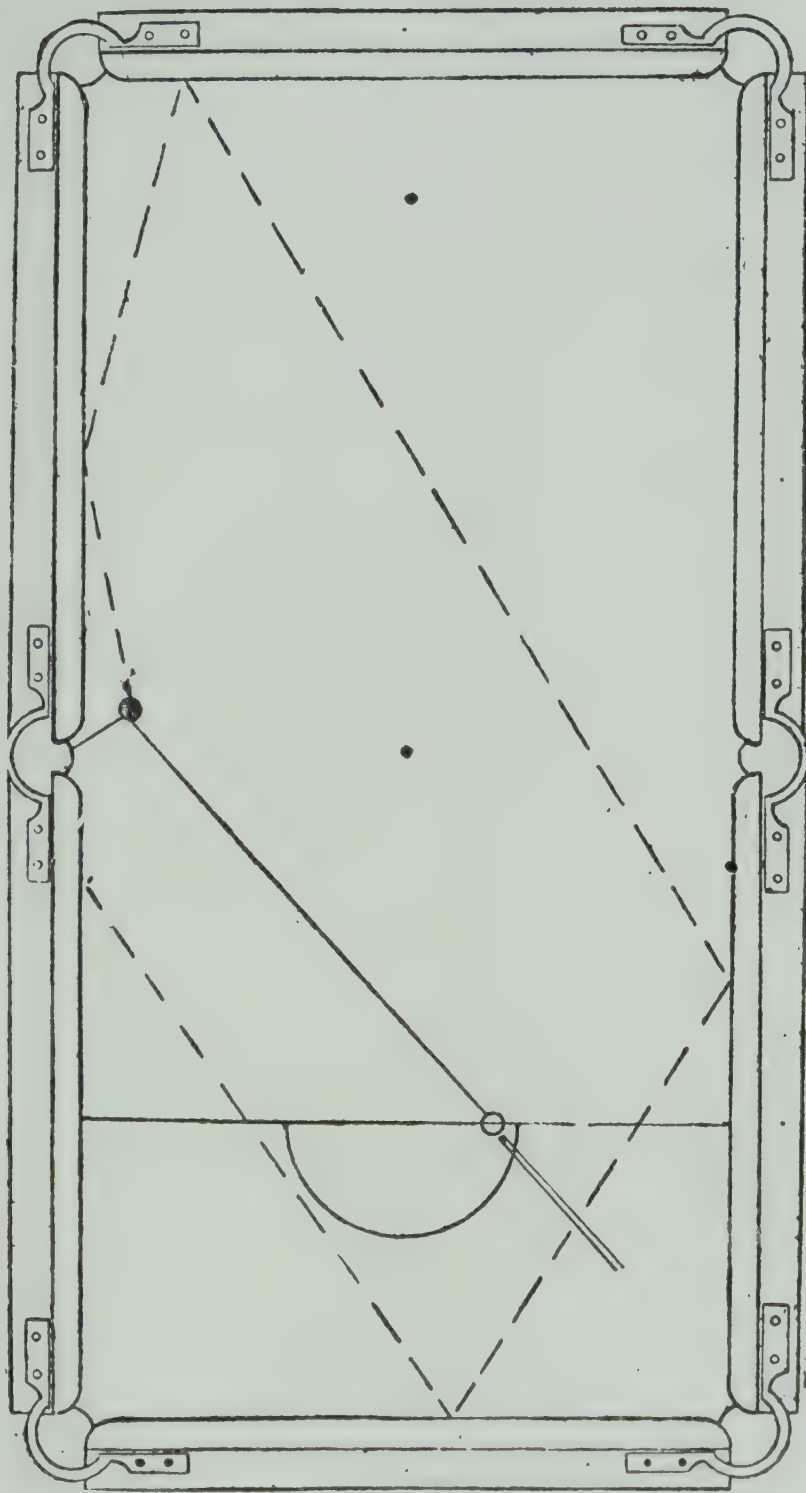


FIG. 119.—An around-the-table stroke—a valuable “loser.”

line of the table, and 3 inches from the left baulk cushion.

Now I have but one losing-hazard stroke left on—the “long jenny” into the left top pocket. These strokes are by no means so difficult as they are generally considered to be. The applause they invariably create is as often as not merely expended over the superficial aspect of the stroke, which undoubtedly has a charm about it. But the general disregard of the after-position of the object-ball shows how little the real essence of the stroke is appreciated. The making of the “long jenny” in itself is really a simple matter, and should be within the compass of any average player. When, however, it comes to a demand upon him of a care of the object-ball’s location in addition to the score, then the proceeding is not at all so easy. Watch a professional performer make the stroke—and among them all Dawson is by far the most proficient “long-jenny” manipulator—and do not fail to note how he strives for the after-position of the object-ball. Whether this be to leave it in the middle of the table for another losing hazard, or to take it in close proximity to the other object-ball for an ensuing cannon, he will play the stroke as the direction of the object-ball demands that it shall be played. Often enough he may be able to get the “jenny” by a half-ball contact, the plainest of strokes to judge. But as this will not guide the object-ball to its desired destination, another and a less sure method of playing the stroke must be tried. Either a thinner (nine times out of ten it is a thinner contact than half-ball that is needed) or fuller collision between the cue and object-balls must be made.

At one period of the last century, when “jenny” play was very much the fashion, an old-time player, named

Duften, a contemporary of old John Roberts, was renowned for his execution of these strokes. A stock saying of his, whenever a "long jenny" showed itself, is placed on record. It ran thus: "A guinea I make the 'long jenny,' and a guinea I win the game!" As the "jenny" was little short of a certainty to him, his offer after a time became appreciated at its full value. All the same, Duften did not play the "jenny" well, that is as regards his control of the running of the object-ball. Generally he left it under the opposite cushion—the worst form of playing the stroke that could possibly be.

To play the "long jenny," as I have the red ball placed by the left-baulk cushion, I place the cue-ball at the base of the D, as Fig. 120 shows, thus making the angle to the pocket slightly more narrow than the half-ball or natural angle one. I rely on the left "side" to pull my ball over to the pocket. All the pace I make use of is just sufficient to let the cue-ball reach the objective point—the left top pocket. I try to bring the red ball out to the middle of the table. Taking it a little less than half-ball, the cue-ball, loaded with the left "side," glides by the middle pocket and on past the centre of the left top cushion. Thus far it has shaped a course which would take it on to the top cushion an inch or two wide of the pocket. Afterwards, however, the "side" works its will as the ball loses pace, and thence till it falls into the pocket it can plainly be seen pulling and pulling over to the pocket opening. Meanwhile the red ball goes out to the centre of the table, and stops 11 inches above the middle line of the table and 3 inches to the right of it.

A top-pocket losing hazard, as usual at the most

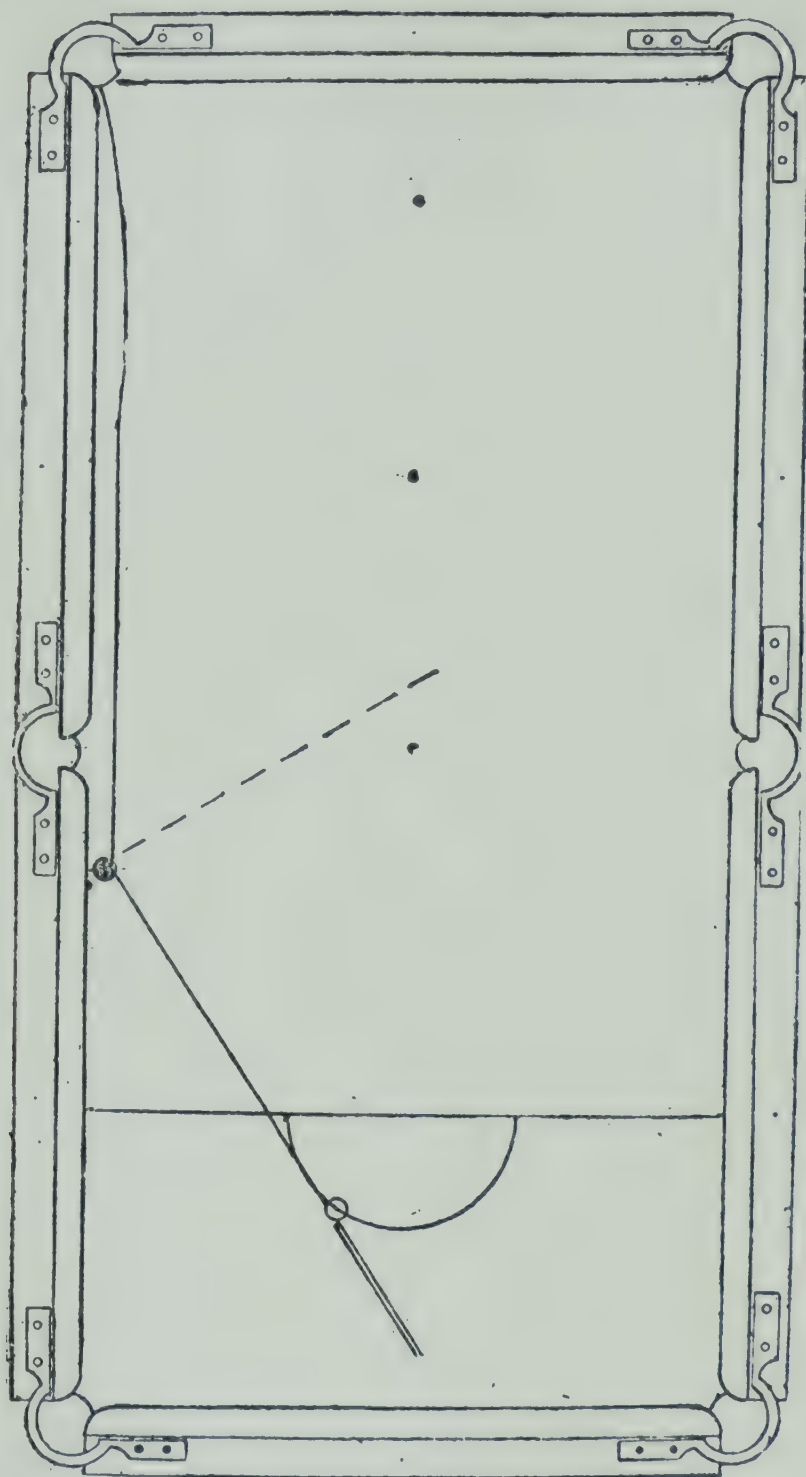


FIG. 120.—A long "jenny" leaving the object-ball out in the centre of the table.

narrow pocket—the tight one—is what I now play for. Just a nice free half-ball stroke with a trifle of left

“side.” Fig. 121 shows this stroke, and as it is similarly

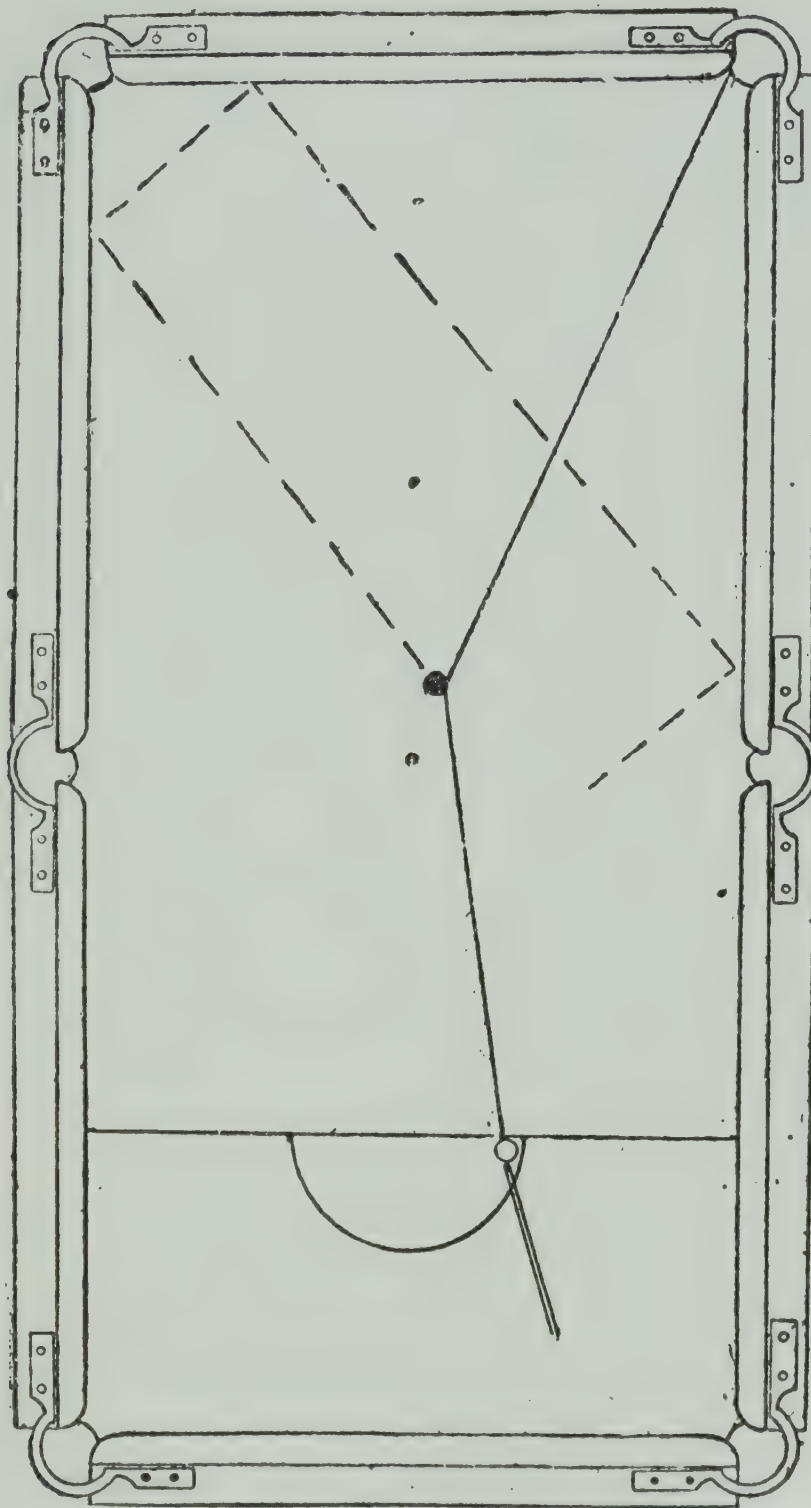


FIG. 121.—Free half-ball stroke driving the object-ball around the upper half of the table.

executed to several others that have gone before, I will not dwell upon it. Suffice it to say that the red ball

after striking all three upper cushions, comes to rest $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the right baulk cushion, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the middle line of the table.

This time the losing hazard that is presented to me is not a particularly easy one. It is plain that I must play for the right middle pocket with a "screw" shot, and make the object-ball traverse something like a double length of the table to get it into the required central position. So, of course, a forcible stroke is required to get the object-ball through baulk. There is a distinct danger of overscrewing this kind of stroke. The best way to play it is by a kind of "stun" shot, which will help greatly in the making of the hazard, and at the same time drive the object up, down, and back again up the table. A strong stroke on the cue-ball, striking it a little below the centre, getting well on to the face of the object-ball, is the chief requisite. The cue-ball is placed almost at the left extremity of the D, and directed squarely off the object-ball to the pocket. As I play it the red ball keeps too much to the right side of the table, as the result of too thick a contact. It runs up off the baulk cushion, stopping 14 inches above the baulk line, and $15\frac{3}{4}$ inches from the side cushion, leaving me a decidedly awkward shot to negotiate (see Fig. 122).

By this location I am given the option of two strokes that will place me in the way of continuing my sequence of losing hazards. These strokes are either an insertion of the red ball into the right middle, or a long "jenny" into the right top pocket. The winning hazard is not too easy of execution, for of all ordinary strokes there are none so frequently missed by the great professional

players as these middle-pocket winning hazards. As in

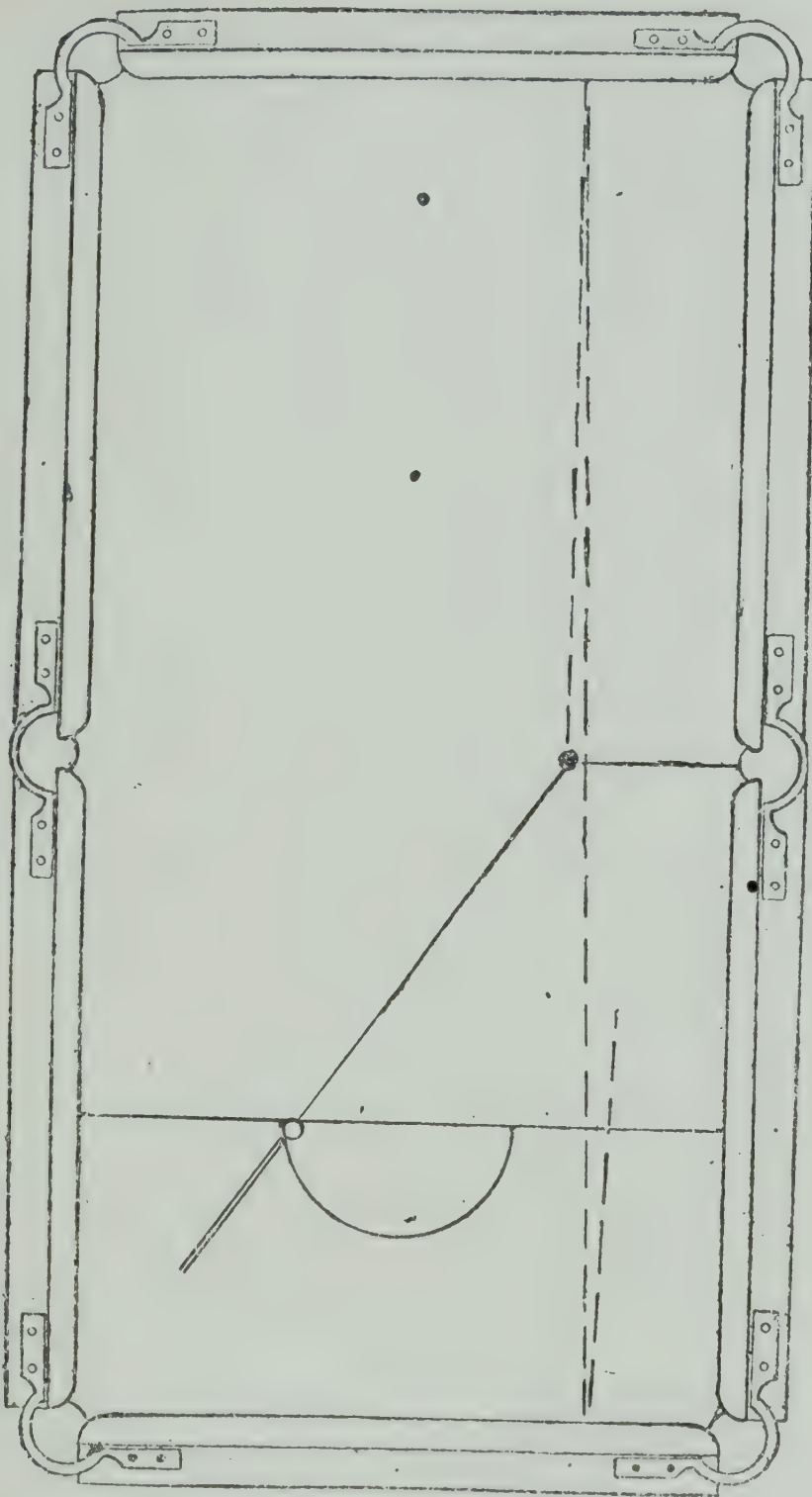


FIG. 122.—“Screw” losing hazard doubling the object-ball in and out of baulk.

other strokes it is not the actual score that causes the failure. The needs of “position” always tend to make

the hazard a more difficult one than if it were played for itself alone, and the subsequent location of the cue-ball entirely ignored. Just recently Diggle, at Brighton, ran up a wonderful break of 791. What was the stroke he failed at? Why, a middle-pocket winning hazard! As I say, this stroke is ever a stumbling-block to the most skilful of players. The reason of it I have given, and to that may be added the precision that is required in winning as compared to losing hazards or cannons. Unless played at very gentle strength, the ball that one intends to pocket cannot find the descent to the latter if anything beyond a mere brushing of the "shoulders" occurs. It hardly needs the telling how helpful the guarding "shoulders" are in the connection of the losing hazard, nor how they practically double the size of the opening to a ball strongly loaded with "side." To the winning hazard, however, they stand as danger signals, the more particularly in the case of the middle pocket "angles" in all obliquely lined shots.

So avoiding the winning hazard, as much with a view to presenting a new variety of losing hazard as to escape playing the treacherous winning hazard, I go for the long "jenny." This is one of a rather uncommon sort. It differs considerably from the ordinary long "jenny" played from a ball much nearer to the side cushion, which gives the cue-ball a practically parallel run with the top-side cushion all the way up to the pocket. In the latter case you have but to make something verging very closely, if not quite, resembling the half-ball "natural" angle, and leave your "side" to do the rest. The bias will invariably carry the cue-ball into the pocket, although it may strike the side cushion

a foot or more below the pocket. It fairly pulls it in, for there is no resistance from the cushion, because the ball is travelling in a parallel line with it and in no wise counter to it.

Take the object-ball further away from the cushion towards the centre of the table, however, and the character of the "jenny" is completely altered. Now the top-side cushion is a decided element of danger. If the cue-ball happens to make an impact with it anywhere short of an inch—or two at the most—of the pocket opening, the "jenny" will most certainly not be accomplished. Coming from a decided oblique direction, the cue-ball will find the cushion throwing it away instead of remaining neutral, as when it travelled in a parallel line along the face of the embankment. This is a point that must always be closely noted in such shots, and allowance must always be made for the working of the "side," which is the essential of "jenny" play. This allowance takes the shape of making the angle decidedly narrower than the natural one. And it is in this fashion that I place my ball for the stroke.

I put it at the base of the D, a little to the left of its centre. To glance at the angle which you know a half-ball contact with the red will throw the cue-ball is to find that the latter will be directed on to the top cushion two or three inches wide of the pocket. It is so in effect. But, by piling on the right "side," you will find the pocket in a manner that will surprise those who have not closely studied its important influence. As the ball slows in its running—say when a couple of feet short of the pocket—it can be seen to perceptibly pull in to the pocket. This stroke does not require to

be played with "drag"—viz. a low striking of the cue-

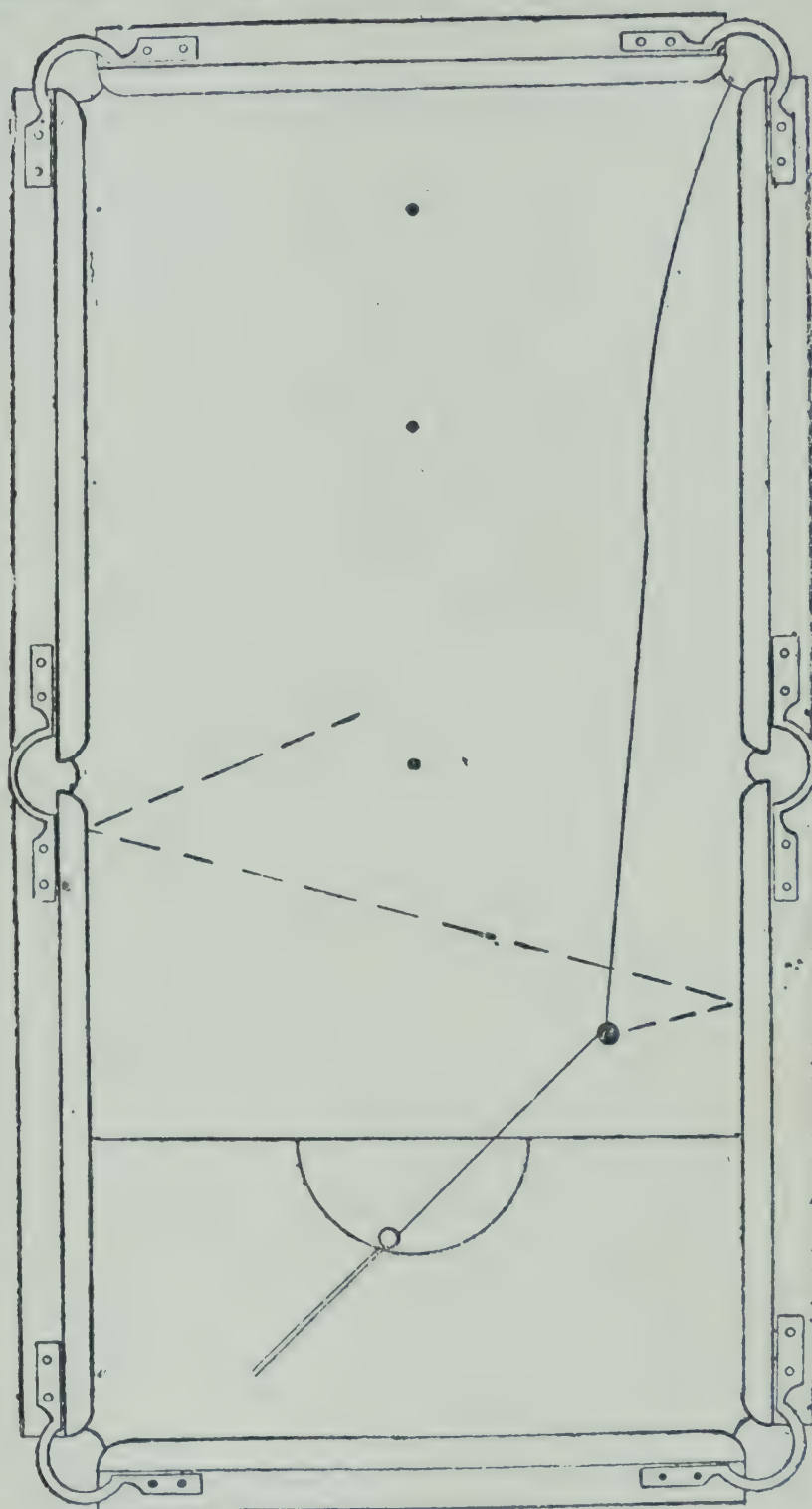


FIG. 123.—A long "jenny" off a ball well out from the side cushion trying to double the object-ball out to the centre of the table.

ball—as the object-ball is so near to the point that you play from. Therefore, give the maximum of "side" to

the cue-ball by striking it at the centre of its height taking the red a nice half-ball at medium pace. You double the coloured ball out to the centre of the table in something after the fashion of the dotted lines on Fig. 123. Before leaving this subject of "jenny" play, I must repeat some advice that I gave in an earlier chapter—when the object is short of the middle pockets use central "side," but when it lies above the middle pockets use "drag" side in all long jennies. "Drag" side—a low striking of the cue-ball on its side—should invariably be played in all middle-pocket "jennies." The latitude of the red ball following the long jenny is $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches above the middle of the table and $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches to the left of it (see Fig. 123). Here we have a plain half-ball stroke into the right top pocket played with freedom to drive the red around the upper half of the table with the idea of making it return somewhere between the middle pockets. It comes to a standstill $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the middle of the table and three-fourths of an inch to the right of it (see Fig. 124).

This time the losing hazard into the right middle pocket—the only shot that is really "on"—is not too easy. It is one of those betwixt and between sort of shots which demand nice execution of the player, and a wholesome application of "side"—right "side," in this instance. You need to strike the cue-ball below its centre and smartly, getting nicely on the face of the red, for the more centrally you can strike the latter and still make the losing hazard, the more will it be kept in the middle of the table. The "side" will be found especially helpful when the cue-ball drops on to the upper "shoulder" of the pocket you are aiming at, as

will not infrequently happen. It will be diverted into

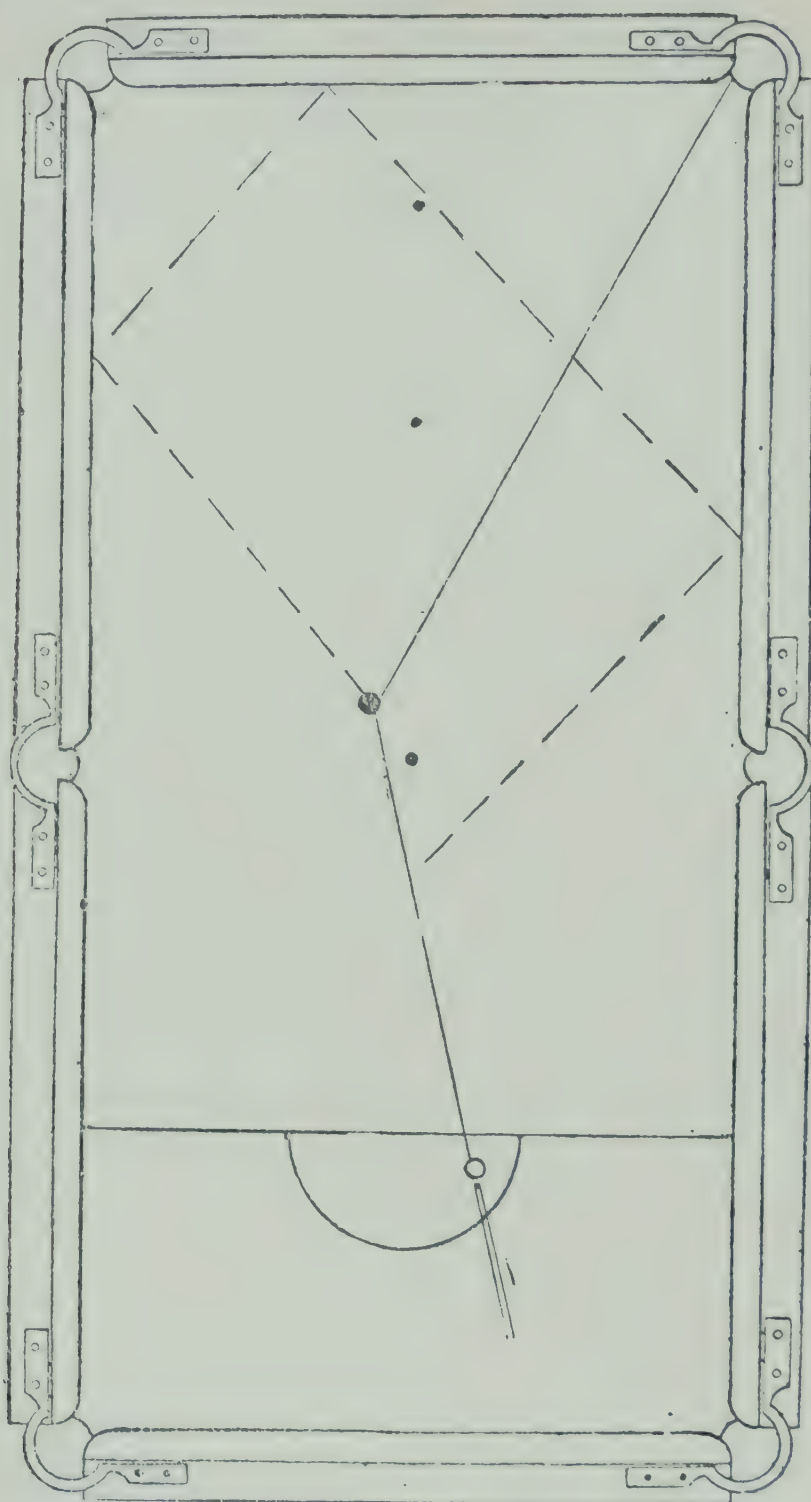


FIG. 124.—Long half-ball stroke driving the object-ball around the upper half of the table.

the orifice with the increased velocity and smoothness which marks the presence of bias on the ball. Where I

left the red ball after making this shot was exactly midway between the middle and pyramid spots, but $6\frac{1}{4}$ to the left of the table (see Fig. 125).

Whenever the object-ball is stationed midway between the middle and pyramid spots, either to the right or left of the table, just so long as there is a losing hazard into one or other of the top pockets, then the thing to avoid in its manipulation is a contact with the shoulders of the latter, or its disappearance off the table. You have doubtless all heard of that famous stroke technically known as the "pair of breeches," a term which is applied to a six-shot made by a dual winning and losing hazard into the top pocket simultaneously. Place a ball exactly midway between the middle and pyramid spots, and play a half-ball losing hazard into one of the top pockets. If you do not quite bring off the double event—the inserting of both balls in the opposite openings—providing, of course, that you play the stroke at all as it should be played, you will get so near to it as to give you a proof that you have hit upon a position, which, if it does not absolutely guarantee the said "pair of breeches," yet will mostly bring it into being. Thus, when working a single object-ball, as in this red ball control of mine, the opposite pocket to the one in which you intend depositing the cue-ball is a distinct source of danger to your after-position. The half-ball natural angle stroke will only lead, as I say, to the pocketing of the object-ball with your own, or a catching in the jaws of the pocket opening towards which it must make its way. In playing as I am with only the red ball upon the table, the first happening

means the sure ending of my break ; and in the second

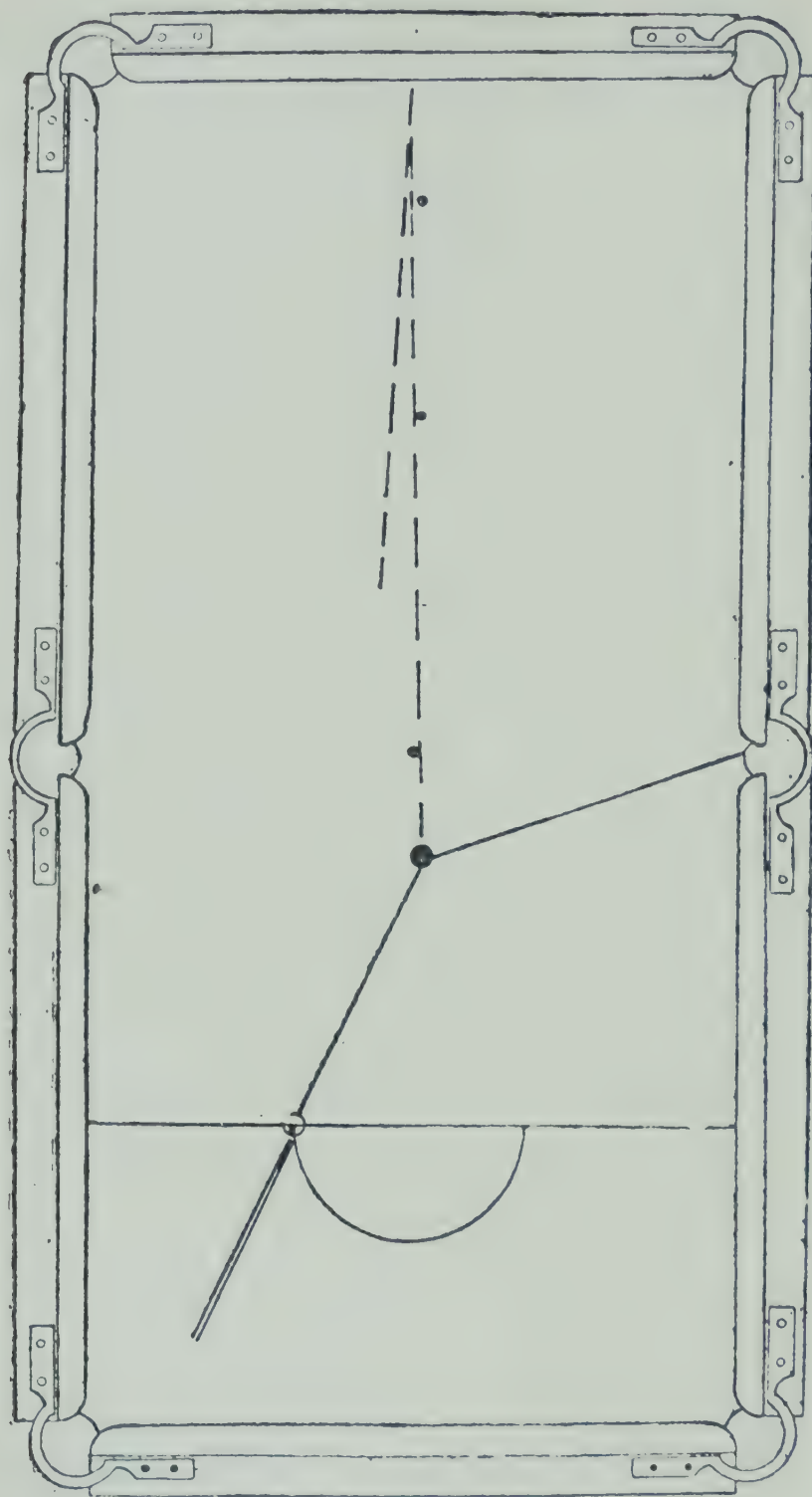


FIG. 125.—Middle pocket "loser" with strong right "side."

case, it is long odds against my seeing the object-ball in any but an unfavourable location.

This preface to the position shown on Fig. 126 is

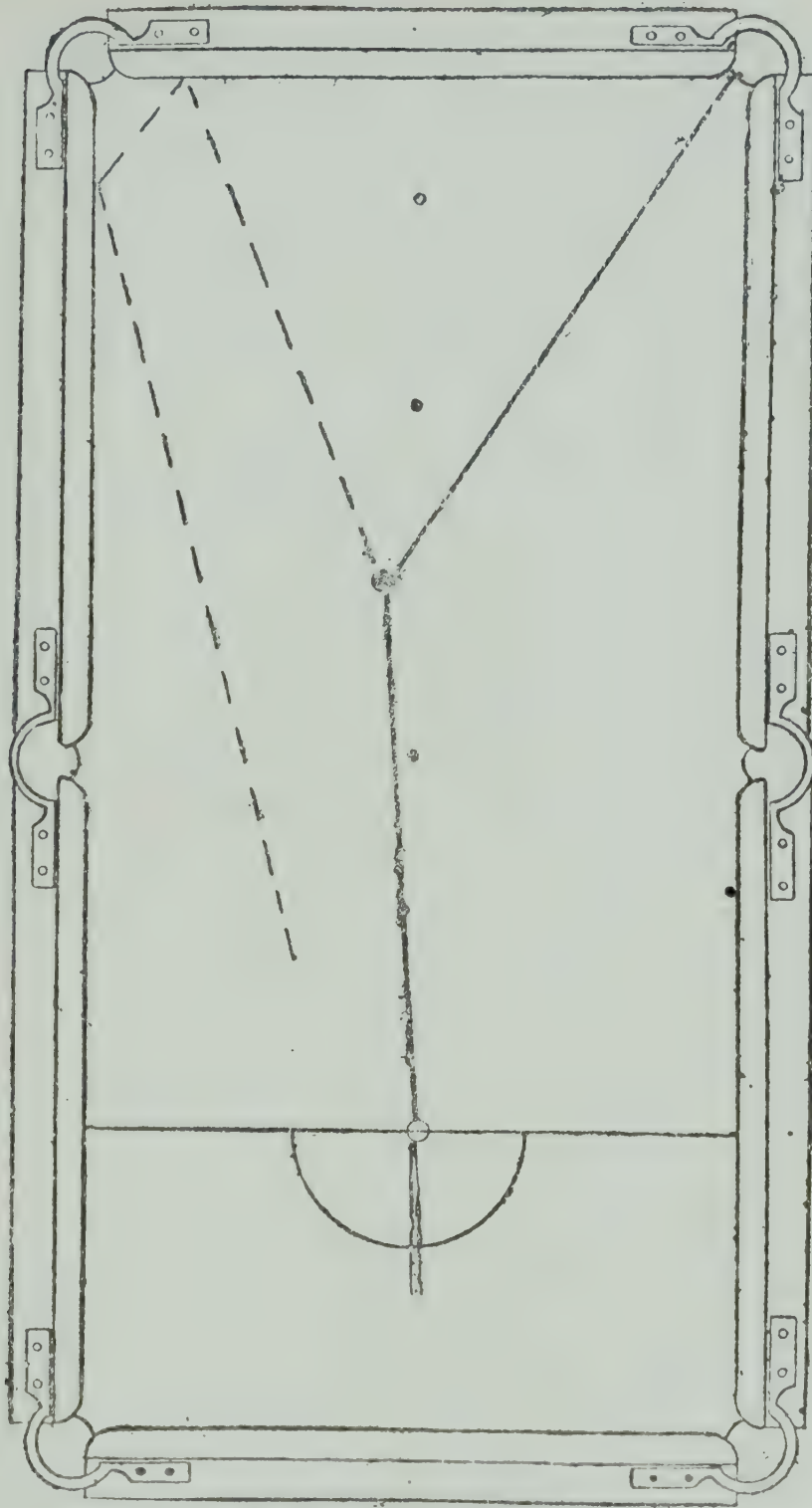


FIG. 126.—Avoiding the “pair of breeches” or six-shot by hitting the object-ball very fully. The proper game with only one object-ball on the table.

given so as to throw a clearer light upon the kind of stroke that will have to be employed to once more

get it into the desirable field of play. As may be remembered, the coloured ball was left standing centrally between the middle and pyramid spots, but $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches to the left of the table. Equally, as though it lay right in the middle line of the table, there is still the "pair of breeches" and a boggling in the jaws of a corner pocket to be avoided. The half-ball stroke will breed one or other of these things, so I must needs go upon another tack. To steer the red ball clear of the shoals that lie around the left top pocket is, of course, my aim. To bring this about, and at the same time to keep the losing hazard within reasonable bounds of being made, I simply place the cue-ball in position for a plain half-ball stroke. What I want to do, however, is to catch the red slightly fuller than half-ball, so as to direct it on to the top cushion, which is a much easier and sounder method than cutting it to the side cushion. I say this in despite of the fact that it means a departure from my principle of keeping the object-ball to the middle of the table. It is one of the few exceptions to the standing rule.

Although placing the cue-ball in a manner which forms a natural half-ball angle to the right top pocket (the pocket played at), I counteract its true running by the use of a very little left "side"—not "drag" side, but pure unadulterated "side," which comes with a striking of a cue-ball at the centre of its height. The little bit of left "side" I employ enables me to make use of a slightly fuller contact with the object-ball than the actual angle presents. The red ball takes the top cushion as per Fig. 126, and running out to the centre of the table by the medium of the top-side cushion

comes to rest $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches above the baulk line and $12\frac{3}{4}$ inches to the left of the board—quite a perfect shot. In directing the red, it is as well to bear in mind that the nearer it is sent to the left top pocket the more will it come out to the middle of the table. But no risks should be taken in this, and in the way that I have played the stroke may be seen a close approach to the best point on the top cushion to which the red ball should be driven.

Before following on with the sequence of my break, I should like to show the difference existing between the stroke I have played and a stroke that is very often used at a similar position, the thin cutting stroke played with strong running—in the shot under notice it would be right—"side." In the instance of this thin shot the red ball will be turned on to the side cushion instead of the top cushion—in my opinion a defect in itself, as it will perforce be carried across, or partially across, the table, a running which ill compares with the passage that the fuller stroke and a contact with the top cushion induces. The latter brings the ball back towards you as you stand behind the D and gives a feeling of security to your after-procedure, to say nothing of bringing you in touch with the middle pockets, which it is almost superfluous to point out is the easiest play in the losing-hazard connection. Fig. 127 shows the action of the thin cutting stroke and the direction which it gives to the red ball. Much depends, naturally, upon the pace that is used and the degree of contact made, but whatever these may be there is a decidedly lingering uncertainty about the thin cutting—that does not warrant its being employed when only *one* object-ball is upon the table.

Accept. No:

U.D.C.

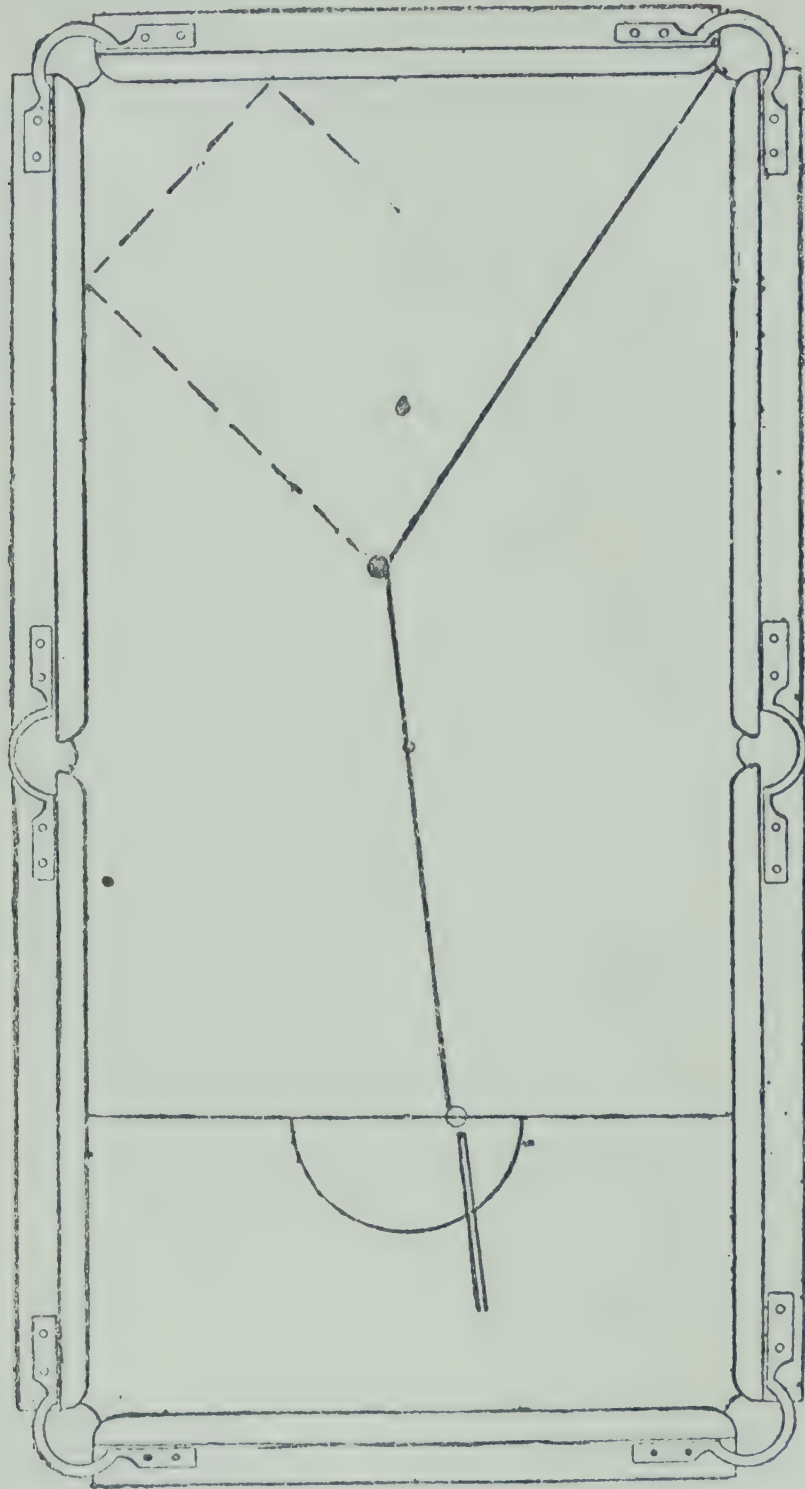
No:

No:

Before

1670
7947/MAN

I say *one* object-ball advisedly. If the two of them



IG. 127.—Avoiding the “pair of breeches,” or six-shot, by the use of a thin cutting “side” stroke. Not so good as the fuller stroke shown on the preceding figure, as the object-ball is left out of position.

are in play, with the object-white in any position on

either side of the board that will ensure a "drop" cannon being left, then the thin cutting stroke with right "side" is undoubtedly the proper game to play. Examples of this can be seen on Fig. 128. I refer, of course, to the object-white being stationed in the upper half of the table when speaking of "drop" cannons. Let it be below that, and the fuller shot must hold sway from every point of view. It will lead to a middle-pocket winning hazard, quite one of the best known agencies to rescue a ball lying behind the baulk-line. Or if the second object-ball be above the baulk sphere, though still out of the desirable field of play, the fuller stroke illustrated on Fig. 126, will be the best means to get it into the working regions. After the playing of the full stroke to avoid the "pair of breeches" stroke (see Fig. 126), the red ball stopped $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches short of the baulk line, and $12\frac{3}{4}$ inches to the left of the table.

With this position before me I play a plain half-ball stroke into the left middle pocket. I play it gently, to direct the red ball to a point somewhere below the pyramid spot, to leave, of course, a losing hazard in one or other of the top pockets. But I hit it a trifle too hard, and it passes above the pyramid spot, finally coming to a standstill $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the top cushion and $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches to the right of the table. It has been in play—that is in losing-hazard play—all along the line it has taken since being driven on by the cue-ball. All the same it was badly-judged "strength" to send it so far ahead (see Fig. 129).

Still, I find a very easy-looking stroke into the right top pocket. In itself the losing hazard is easy, but the

same can hardly be said of it when the needs of the

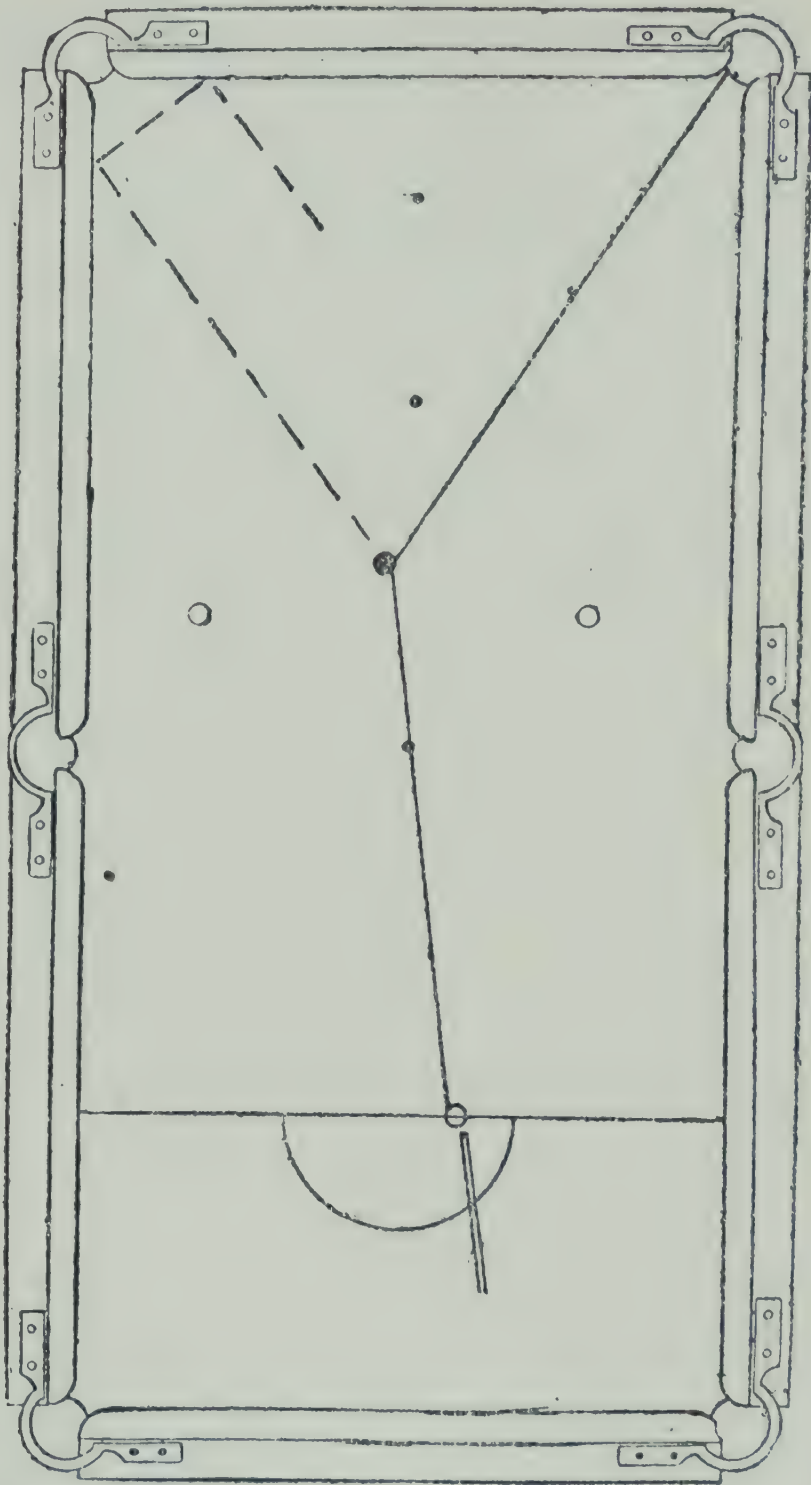


FIG. 128.—The same thin cutting stroke, as on Fig. 127, showing its value when the object-white is on the table.

after-position of the red ball is combined with the purely scoring stroke. The average amateur would be quite

content to "go in" the pocket half-ball from the red,

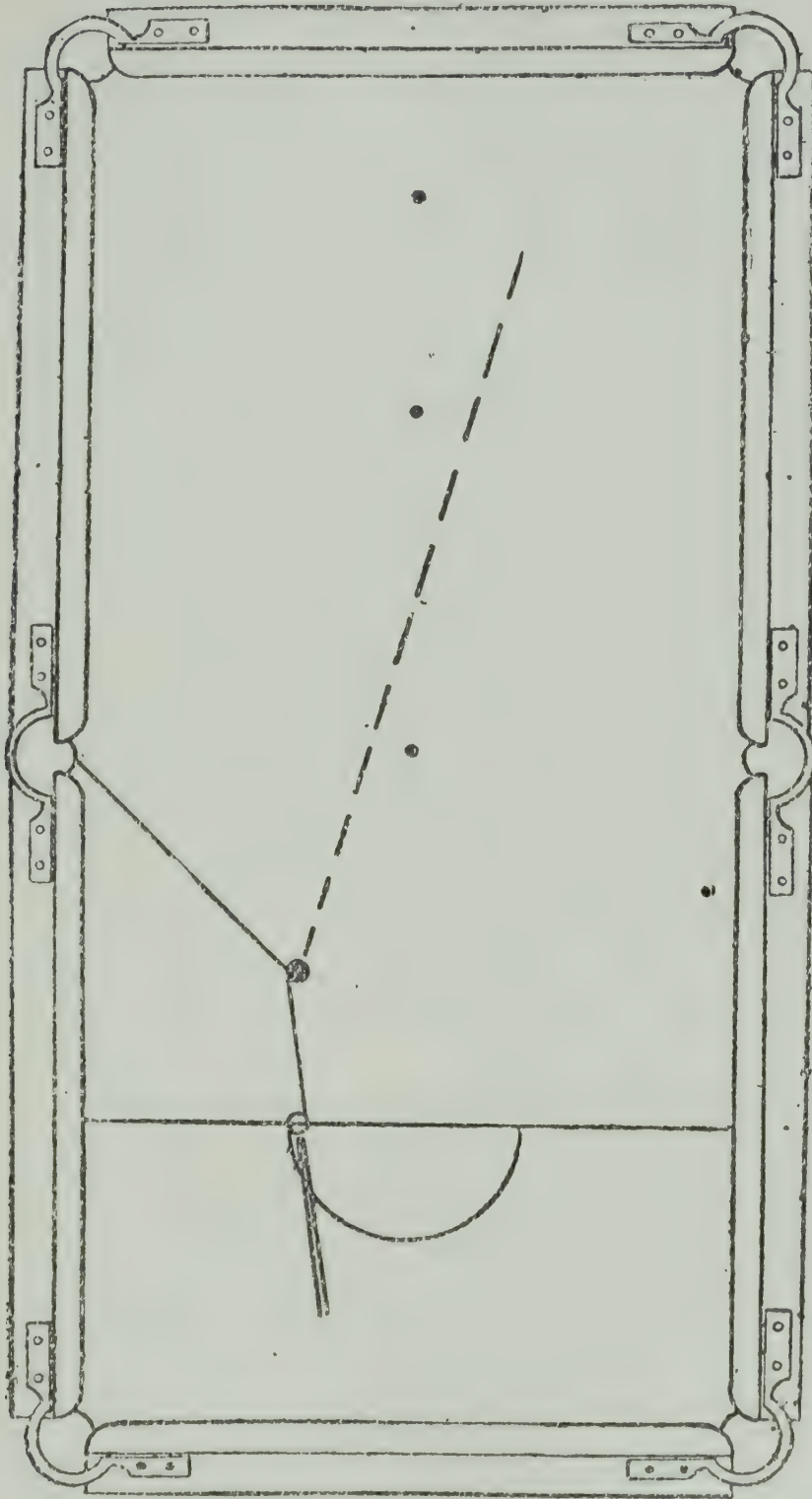


FIG. 129.—Slow half-ball "loser" trying to guide the red ball to the middle of the table to a point somewhere below the pyramid spot—a poor attempt.

and take his chances of where the latter might run. However he played the shot—with a slow dragging

ball or at medium pace—the odds are that just so long as he made the half-ball contact his break would too frequently end with the making of this losing hazard. The object-ball is perforce driven away from the centre of the table, and it will take refuge somewhere under the left rail. It will be sheer luck and nothing else which may give him an *entrée*, in any shape, to the left middle pocket, though it may, of course, happen.

Finding that I cannot hope to achieve any good results from a half-ball stroke from the red, I adapt my stroke to keeping the latter in the middle of the table. Making the angle from the coloured ball to the pocket slightly narrower than the half-ball one, I make use of “drag” and a little left “side” on my ball. The stroke is very little more difficult than the half-ball one would be, as the object-ball is so near the pocket. My intention is to take the red slightly fuller than half-ball, and to bring it down the table among the line of spots. I aim half-ball at the red and allow for the little bit of left “side” I am using to draw the cue-ball slightly in on to the red, thus making a trifle thicker impact than I aim for. The “drag” regulates the speed of my ball, and by its means very little force is used in the collision between the two balls, and the cue-ball finds the bottom of the top pocket, while the red, rebounding from the top cushion, runs down the table beside the pyramid spot. It stops in a line with the latter landmark and two inches to the right of it (see Fig. 130).

This time I need only bring the half-ball stroke into play to execute a losing hazard into the same pocket as before—the right top pocket. It will cut the red

sufficiently over to the left side of the table to cause it

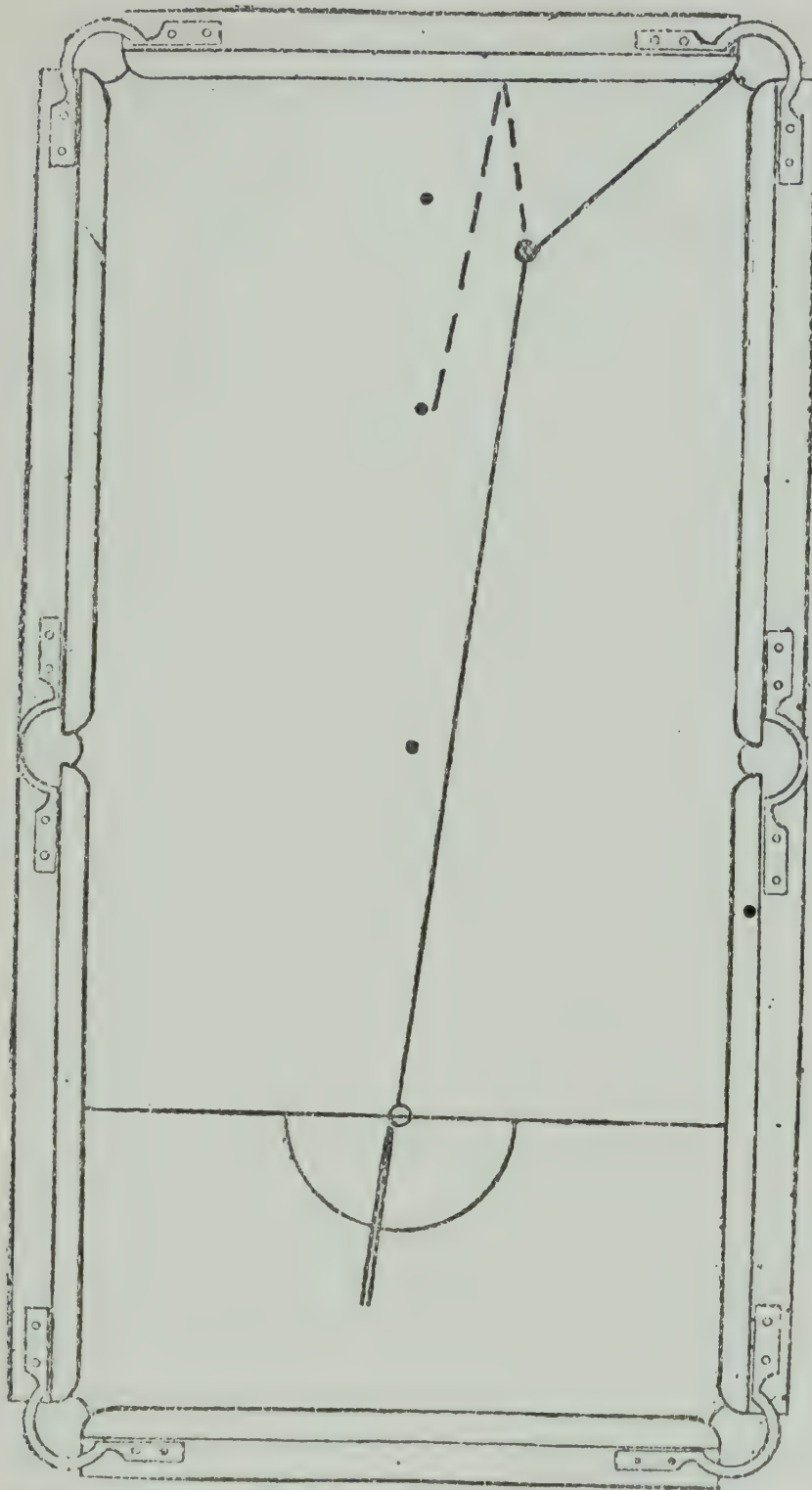


FIG. 130.—A half run-through "loser" using "drag" and reverse "side." The aim is the usual half-ball one, but the left "side" makes the contact fuller. The gentle pace brings the object-ball back by the pyramid spot—a fine stroke.

to take the left top-side cushion so quickly as to enable
VOL. II.

S

it to come nicely away and assume a favourable location

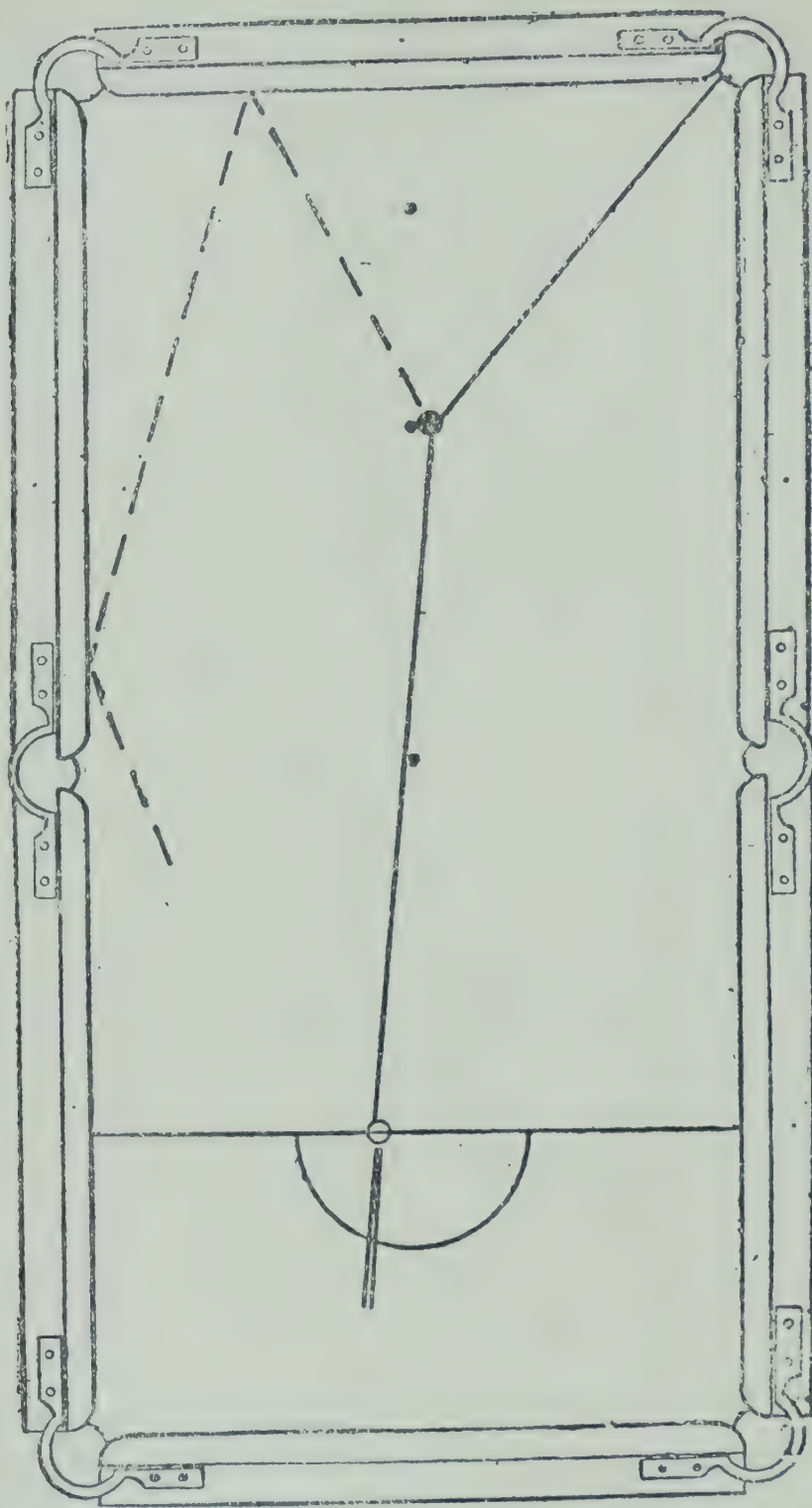


FIG. 131.—Half-ball losing hazard, very poorly played. The red was hit too fully, and instead of coming out to the centre of the table is (luckily) lying near the left middle pocket.

somewhere between the middle spot and the baulk line.

The cleaner contact you make with the object-ball the better will its position be. Fig. 131 shows the stroke as I imperfectly played it. I managed to get a trifle too secure a hold on the red, and it came in too direct a line down the table—by no means a good shot. However, it is removed to a not unfavourable part of the board— $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the middle of the table, and $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches away from the left baulk cushion.

Next, of course, there follows a winning hazard in the left middle pocket, leaving the cue-ball for a losing hazard to the right top pocket off the red ball when it goes up on the billiard spot. As I counselled when dealing with another middle-pocket hazard of this description, do not place the cue-ball for a dead full stroke on, and a follow-up of, the red ball. You want to avoid making a six-shot, also to keep the cue-ball as much away from the cushion as possible, while at the same time obtaining something like the half-ball angle for the anticipated losing hazard. So with these things in view, I lay my ball midway between the right and centre spots of the D, and insert the red by a three-quarter, or slightly fuller, stroke. I do not get as nicely hold of the coloured ball as I had wished, for it wobbles in the jaws of the pocket before dropping out of sight, and the cue-ball runs up to a point that I measure as being $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches above the middle of the table and $11\frac{1}{4}$ away from the left top-side cushion (see Fig. 132).

A forcing losing hazard, as the outline of the angle from red ball to pocket—the right top one—shows me, is my next move. There should never be much difficulty experienced in determining the class of stroke you require to effect a losing hazard off the spotted red ball

into one or other of the corner pockets that flank it.

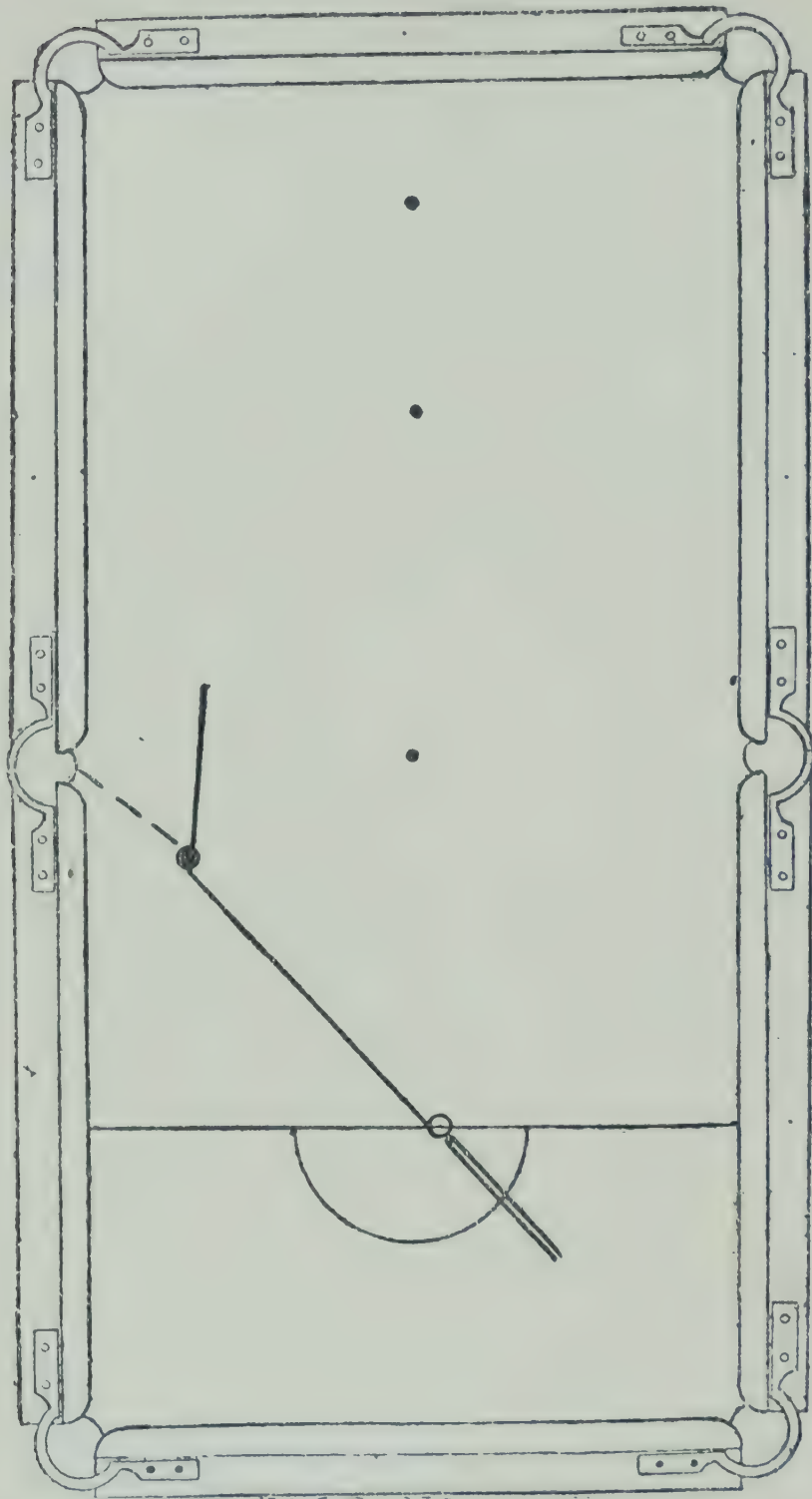


FIG. 132.—Putting in the red ball, and keeping the cue-ball clear of the cushions, the pocket, or its “shoulders” for the subsequent “loser” off the coloured ball as it comes up on the billiard spot.

The middle pockets give you a sign-post that is truth

personified on a correctly built table. The upper

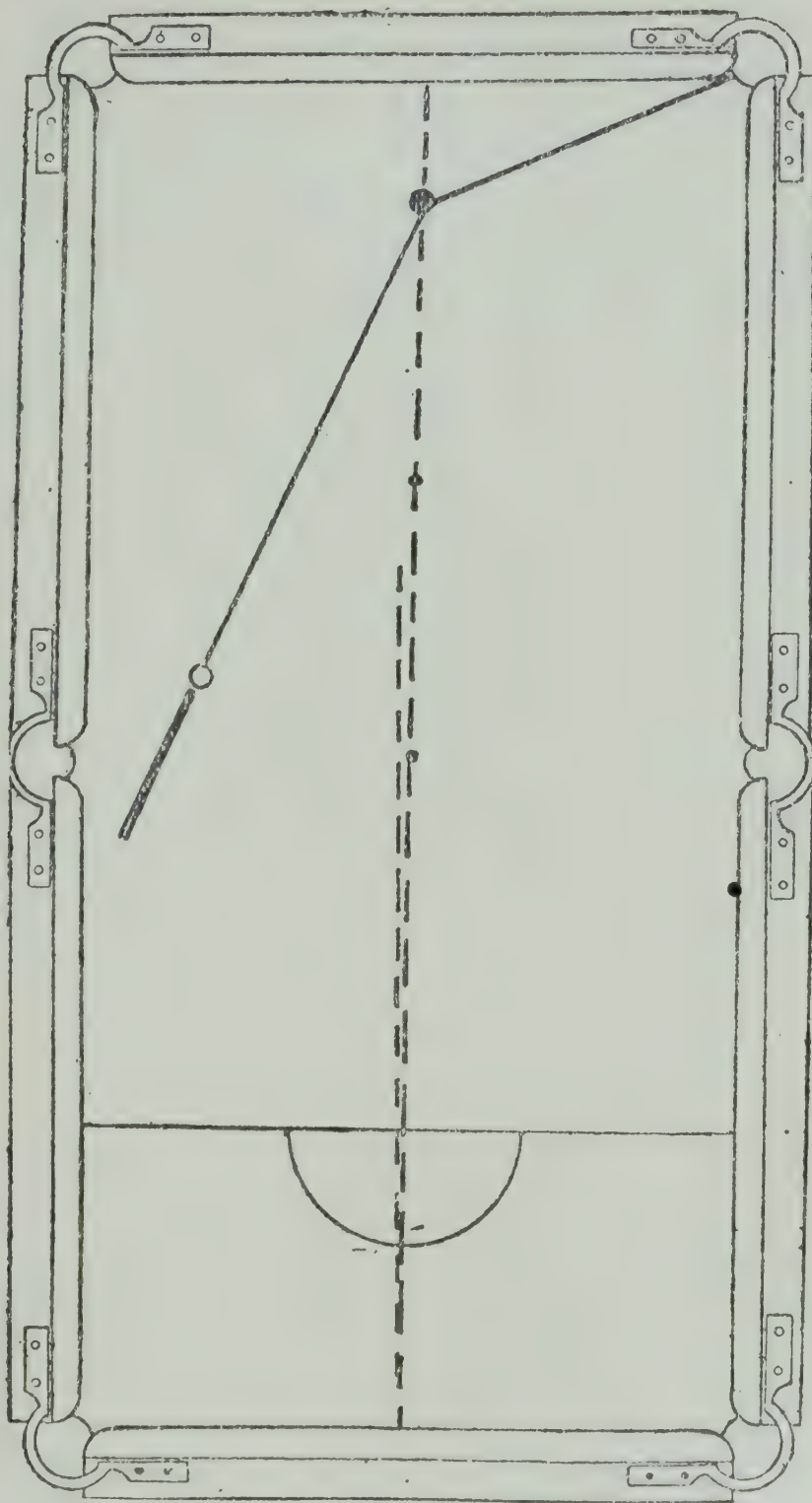


FIG. 133.—Forcing “loser” in the right top pocket from the spotted red ball, which is kept nicely to the centre of the table.

shoulder of the middle pockets forms a guiding line between the forcing stroke and a thin or pulling-in

reverse "side" shot. It shows the exact line of the natural angle to the top pockets from the spotted red ball. Take a direct line from these protruding elbows of the centre pockets on to the centre of the spotted red ball, and you have a simple half-ball stroke which may be played at easy pace to bring the red ball nicely into the middle of the board for further losing hazard procedure. When the ball is lower down the table, say even only aligned between the spotted red ball and the lower middle pocket elbow, then a forcing stroke is needed. Close in to the object-ball running "side" may be used instead of the forcing stroke to counteract the widish angle. At any distance the "double-strength" stroke which sends the object-ball in and out of baulk is the more certain play. With such a decided forcing shot as I have left myself I have no option but to play in this fashion, and hitting my ball high up and with power, I make it swing in off the red. The latter doubles down the table and back again, keeping securely to its central line as shown on Fig. 133.

SOME IRREGULAR LOSING HAZARDS.

I think that, with the return of the red ball to the centre of the table, I have pretty well completed the list of strokes that come within the area of the field of losing-hazard play, as I defined it at the outset of my articles dealing with the control of the red ball when operating from the D. But there are a considerable number of positions into which the red ball is always liable to go outside the ordinary zone, though still presenting a fairly certain "loser."

Prominent among these are the "drag" and "side" strokes into the top pockets when the object-ball is either more widely or more narrowly situated than will allow of the ordinary-speeded half-ball stroke tending to the requirements of the shots. Take, for example, Fig. 134, where the red ball is placed at what is about the widest limit of the running "side"—in this case right "side"—and "drag" stroke. Its exact location is $16\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the top cushion and $21\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the nearest side cushion. Looking at the angle from the red ball to the right top pocket, shows it to be considerably wider than the natural one. Double-strength, in which the red will be forced in and out of baulk, will make the losing hazard. But there is no need to use it. Nicely played "drag"—gained by a low striking of the cue-ball—and plenty of right "side," will do all that is required. Not only that, but will give a more certain after-position to the object-ball. In addition, too, this medium-pace "drag" and "side" shot is in a higher class of billiards altogether than the plain forcing stroke. It is really not any more difficult, though representing to the full the scientific side of the game.

I said so much of "drag" in my earlier lessons, how it overcomes the running of an untrue ball, preserves the "side" and counteracts speed, that there is little occasion for any repetition now. All I shall advise is to be careful to avoid "screwing" your ball when making the necessary low stroke on the cue-ball. Let the cue go forward freely on its own account, right through the ball, as it were. Place the red ball according to the given measurements. Get as near to the natural angle as you can, by putting the cue-ball at the left extremity of the

D, on the left spot. Strike it low down with plenty of

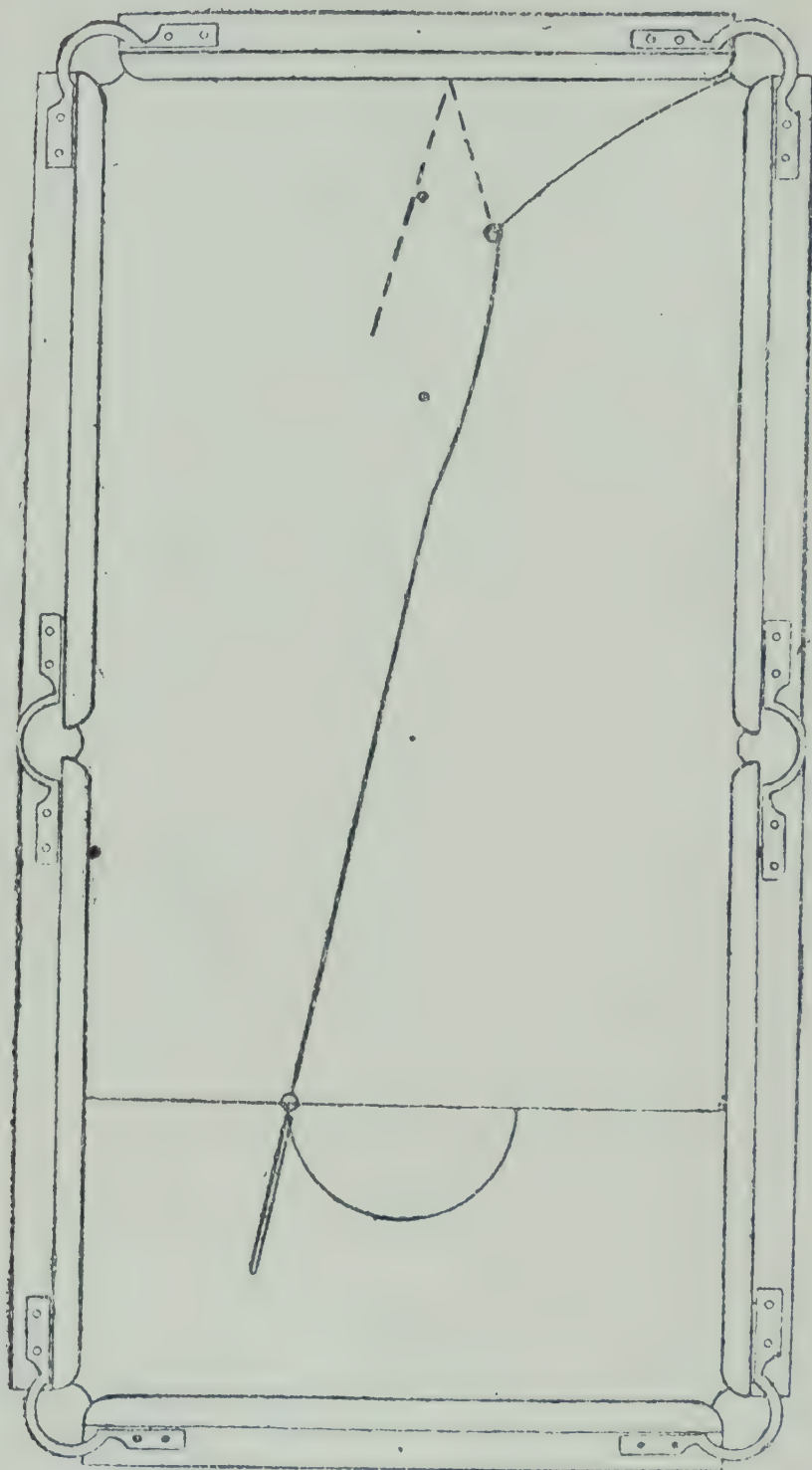


FIG. 134.—A slow "drag," running "side" stroke in place of a forcing one at a wider angle than the half-ball one. Aim fuller than half-ball to allow for the action of the "side."

right "side" at medium pace, and aim nearly, if not

quite, full upon the red. Watch your ball follow the line you have given to it until it arrives to within say a couple of feet of the red. Up to this point the "drag" has held sway on the ball, which has not rolled, but has slid along on its base, for this is the peculiar nature of the "drag" stroke. All the while the "side" has been concealed. But now, when the ball assumes its normal forward rotary motion, as the "drag" dies out, you see the unmistakable action of the "side." This I have endeavoured to depict upon the figure (Fig. 134). You will note a curvature of the line between cue-ball and red ball, commencing a little below the pyramid spot. This is exactly what happens during the latter part of the cue-ball's run up to the coloured ball on the billiard table. It can be plainly observed with the naked eye. The reason is simple beyond measure. Bursting forth into full play, the latent right "side," after the disappearance of the "drag," is pulling the cue-ball over to the right "side" of the table. The nearer it gets to the object-ball the more plainly is it made manifest. Your full, or nearly full, aim is thus turned into a half-ball one, and as this contact occurs between the two balls the cue-ball is nicely thrown over to the pocket, to get into which the "side" it carries helps it all the way. The object-ball goes up by the pyramid spot—a good ending to a pretty shot. Of course, it can be made in either top pocket—left "side" for left pocket, right "side" for right pocket.

On Fig. 135 there will be seen the reverse "side" and "drag" narrow-angle losing hazard into the top pockets. The red ball is placed here $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the top cushion, and 16 inches away from the side cushion, which

latter position is as nearly as possible the limit that will

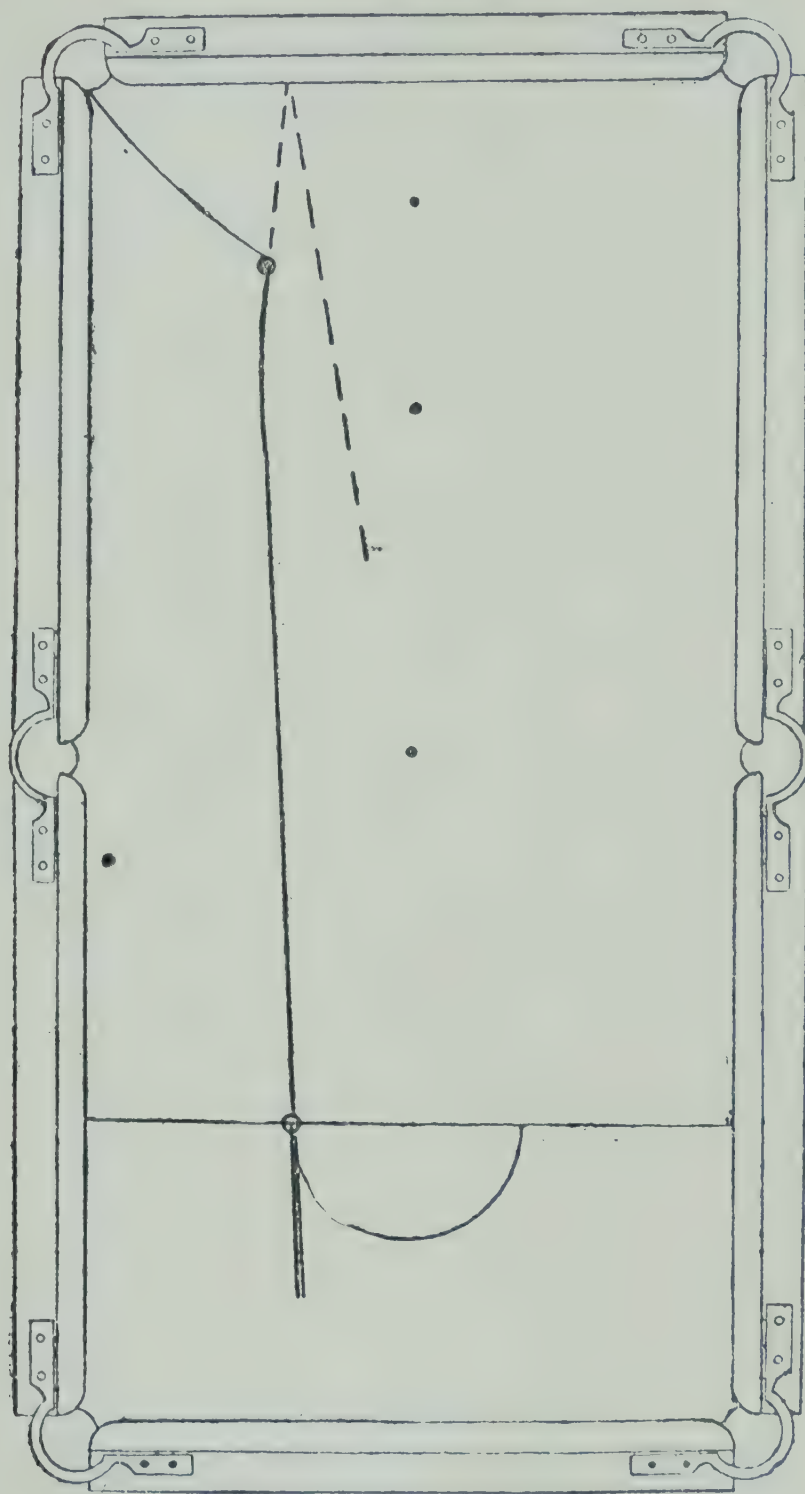


FIG. 135.—A slow "drag," reverse "side" stroke in place of a very thin one. Aim about half-ball, and the "side" will pull the cue-ball in to make a fuller contact on the object-ball.

permit of the stroke being made. Nearer to the top

cushion an even slightly more narrow angle would not prevent the losing hazard, but further down the table the object-ball would of necessity have to be more than 16 inches away from the cushion to ensure the making of this dragging "side" shot—one of the prettiest and most useful of all the losing-hazard kind. Just as the action of running "side" in the stroke on Fig. 134 went to *widen* the angle thrown by the object-ball, so now does the reverse or check "side" decrease it in no uncertain way.

Put the red ball upon the table according to the measurements I give, and look at the angle from ball to pocket. There is no semblance of the natural angle from the most favourable part of the D, is there? You might perchance accomplish the losing hazard by a thin stroke or a run-through with big odds against your doing either every time you tried. In place of such primitive play the science of the game steps in, and practically does the work for you as it should be done. The application of right "side"—which is, of course, reverse "side" to the ball's running up the table—and "drag" are the needful elements on the cue-ball. Again, on the diagram I show the point at which the working of the "side" becomes observable after the "drag" has died away. The reverse "side" pulls the cue-ball in towards the centre of the table, and allowance must be made for this. Aim for an ordinary half-ball stroke on the red. If the cue-ball is propelled truly in this line it will, when it reaches some two feet from the object-ball, curl in on to the red, only a very little, but enough to cause a decidedly fuller impact than a half-ball one. In point of fact, this divergence of the cue-ball from the line it was aimed

of this reverse "side" and "drag" shot is the perfect middle-of-the-table direction the object-ball is almost sure to take if the losing hazard be made.

These running or reverse "side" losing hazards from balls too widely or too narrowly located for natural-angle strokes into the top pockets, can be made into either of the latter, although I have only given a one-pocket example in either case. Which side of the table you are playing to will, of course, determine which is, and which is not, the correct running or reverse "side."

Fig. 136 shows the object-ball near the top pockets, and very close to the top cushion. Losing-hazards off balls so situated should always be played at double strength, making them pass through baulk. Do not try to play them slowly with "drag." There is the danger of a "kiss" to be avoided, and it can only be surely overcome by a fast ball. Played slowly, the slightest contact fuller than half-ball means a certain "kissing" of the balls and certain failure. Therefore, as I have said, play these strokes at double strength, even though the after-position be not quite so well assured to you.

Fig. 137 illustrates the object-balls taken further away from the top pockets, but still close up to the top cushion. Most amateurs try and force in, or half screw and half force, off them, by placing the cue-ball at the further extremity of the D. The professional does not. Providing that the object-ball is as I mean to represent it—from half an inch or more away from the cushion—he sets his ball to make a defined square "screw" of the shot. He spots the cue-ball midway between the spots on the further side of the D for a ball placed, say, anywhere between a foot and 18 inches from a corner

pocket—the diagram pretty well illustrates the angle

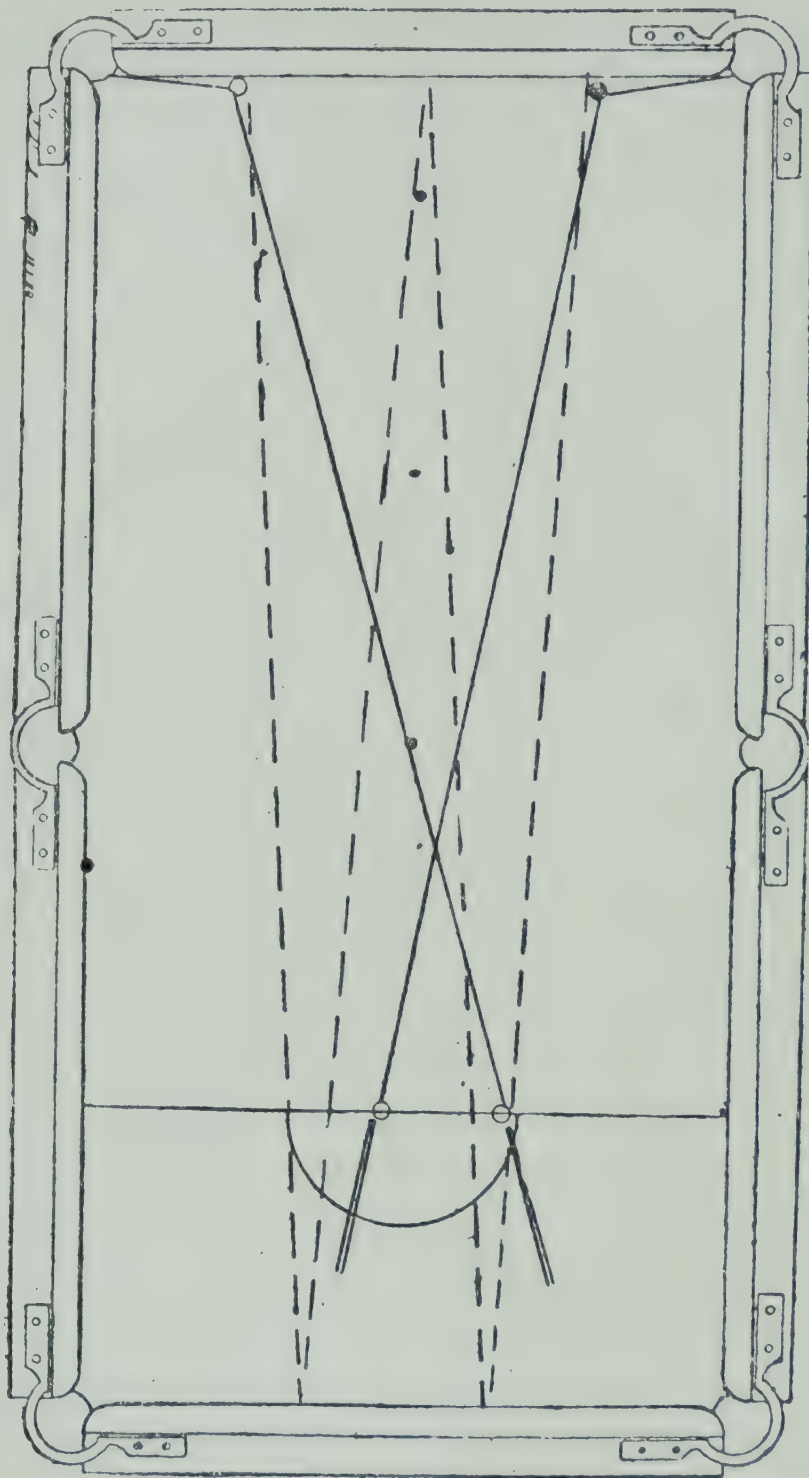


FIG. 137.—Making a definite “screw,” instead of forcing, or half-screwing, and half-forcing the cue-ball.

that is made. Always some reverse “side”—which will act as pocket “side”—and the cue-ball goes squarely

off the object and finds the pocket in pretty style as the latter ball goes down and up the table.

Losing hazards from the side cushion are of frequent occurrence in connection with the "losing-hazard break." Two examples of such strokes are furnished on Fig. 138. They show object-balls in close proximity to the top pockets, but at different distances below them. The chief point to study, of course, in the making of these cushion losing hazards is the part of the side cushion which the cue-ball must strike before colliding with the object-ball. This can easily be determined by the player taking an angle line to the latter from the cushion that will ensure the pocket being safely found by the cue-ball. The closer the object-ball is to the pocket the simpler the stroke, naturally. You have thereby the two objective points so clearly thrown up to you. With the removal of the object-ball, say, four, five, or six inches below the pocket, the latter is completely concealed. And until a player has accustomed himself by much use to these cushion losing hazards, and has the whereabouts of the pocket engraven in his mind, he will find it a great help to walk around the table and note that part of the cushion his judgment of the angle tells him the cue-ball must be sent on to. A good rule applying to the cushion losing hazard is: *the further the object-ball is away from the pocket the wider the angle it is necessary to direct the cue-ball.* For instance, on Fig. 138 it will be seen that the cue-ball is projected from a narrow angle at the left top-pocket shot. Turn to the other stroke—the one in the right top pocket—and note how much more widely the cue-ball is arranged for its run to the side cushion. The difference in the position of the

object-ball (for here it is several inches lower down the table than in the previous-mentioned shot) is the

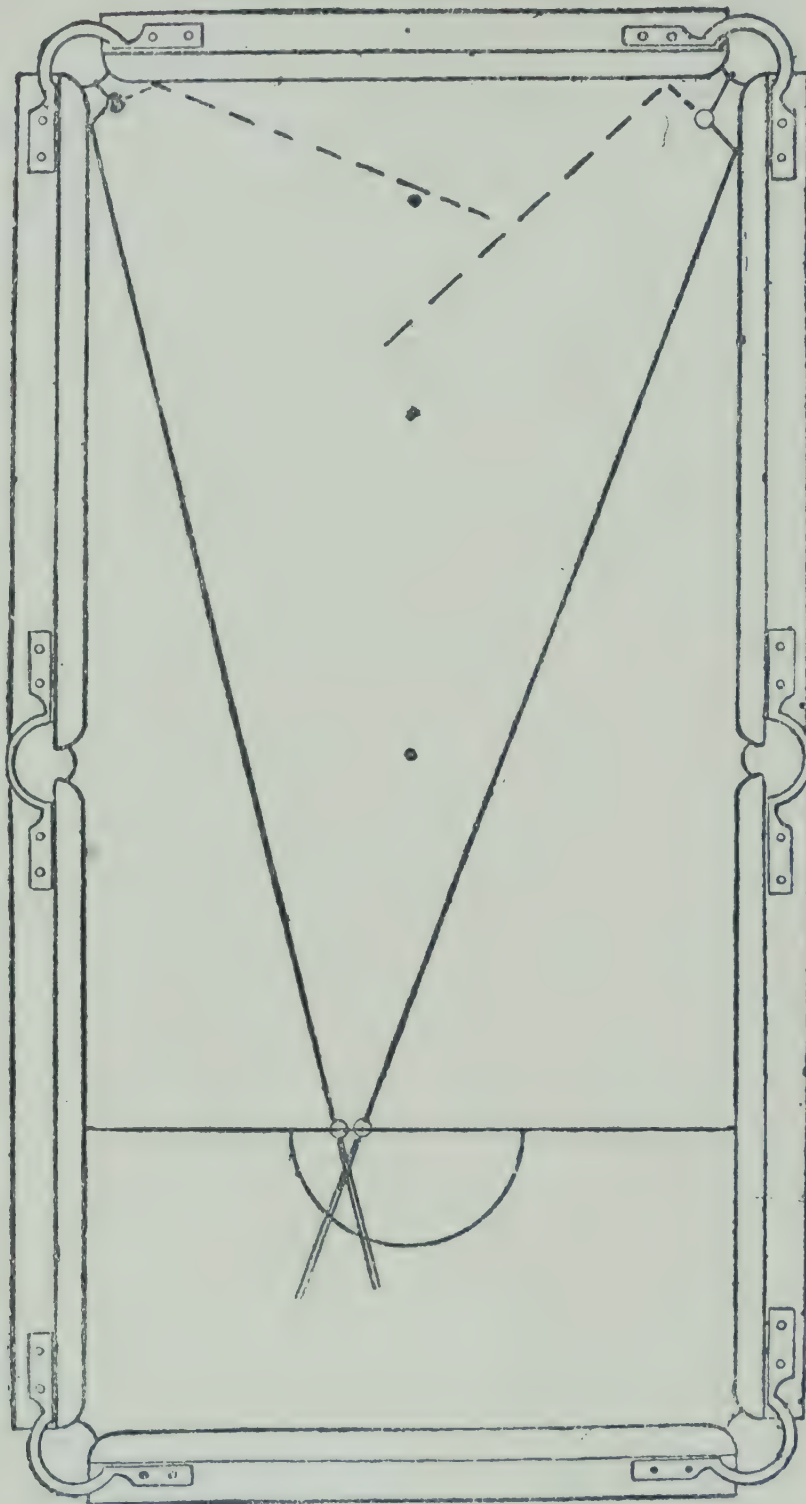


FIG. 138.—Cushion losing hazards.

cause. A very bad fault among amateur players is this placing of the cue-ball too straight with the cushion in

all such strokes as those under notice. The cushion cannot throw the desired angle, because it is taken too slantingly. In addition, too, it is so infinitely more simple to play a stroke that will enable you to hit the cushion close up to your object-ball. These facts should be made careful note of and worked up in connection with cushion losing hazards.

Fig. 139 provides two very homely losing hazards of the same variety, which I only introduce for the reason of making my commentary on the extraneous strokes of the "losing-hazard break" as complete as possible. They are both very easy, as I hardly need to state. The left corner pocket stroke is made from a ball just outside the opening which leaves just sufficient room to get thinly in off it by a direct stroke. Much safer and better is it to make contact with the object-ball *via* the side cushion. In this case you cannot place the cue-ball at too narrow an angle, as it has only to just clip the object-ball. Play from the nearest point in the D—which would, of course, be the end spot—on the same side of the table. I do not show the cue-ball there on the diagram, as the spot is covered by another, represented as making the stroke into the opposite corner pocket.

This latter is an attractive shot. The cue-ball, carrying plenty of running "side," squeezes in behind the object-ball and makes a clean descent into the pocket. It is not difficult to gauge when such a shot is "on." All that it is necessary to judge is that a sufficient opening be permitted the cue-ball, so that it can fall on the top-pocket "shoulder" to be dropped in the pocket opening by its contact with the object-ball.

One thing about these cushion losing hazards that

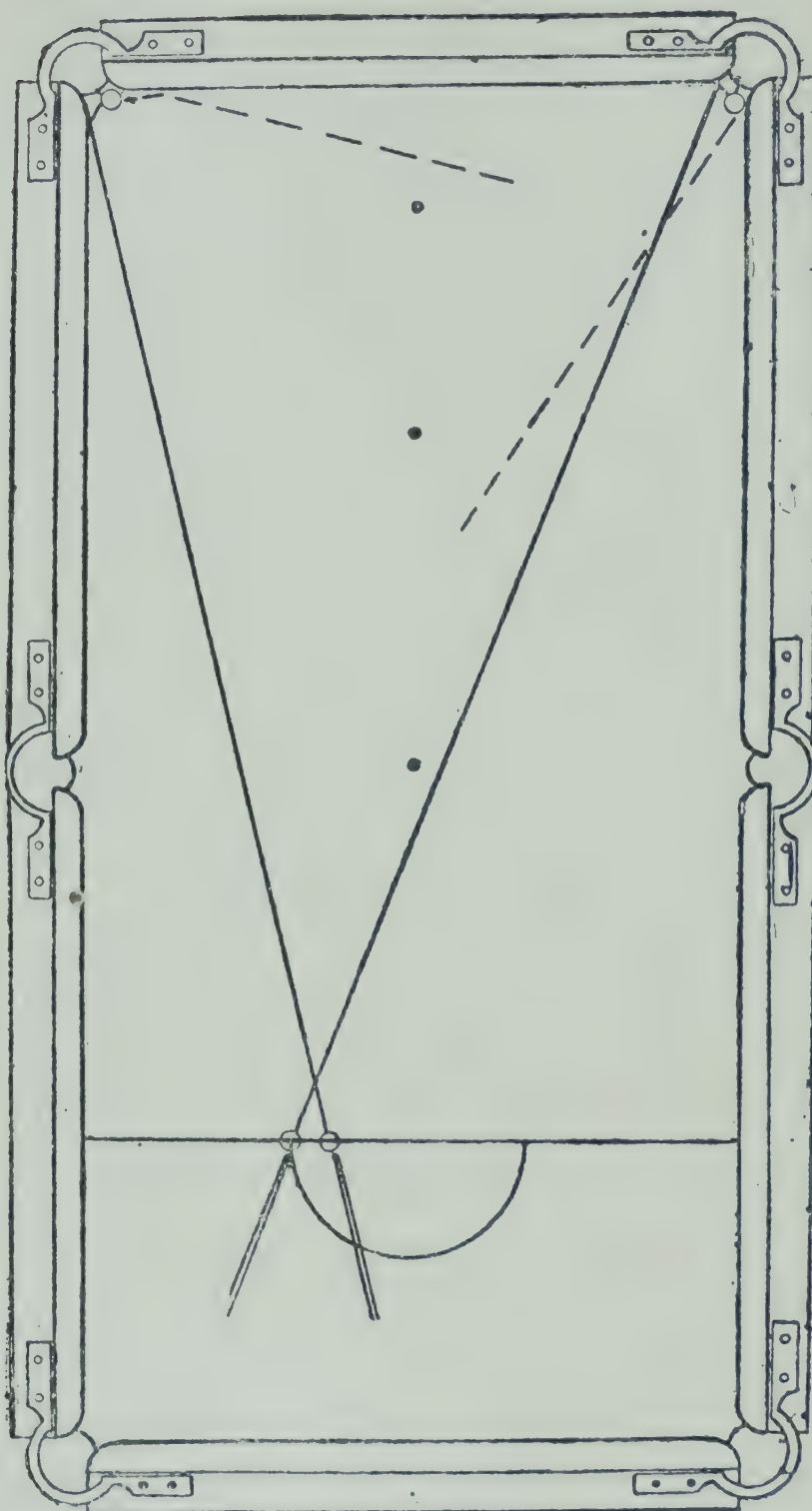


FIG. 139.—“Squeezing” losing hazards.

must never be overlooked is the uncertain direction of the object-ball. You may make the stroke you play for

accurately enough ; but in every instance you will find a different passage communicated to the object-ball. There is no real remedy for such happenings. The discretion of the player and the trimness of the contact he enforces between cue and object-ball alone can bring about a favourable after-position to the latter. But it is very evident—or should be—that the fuller the contact made with the object-ball in nearly every cushion losing-hazard stroke the better will its position be for the ensuing stroke. Still, the chief consideration is the making of the actual scoring stroke, and in the respect of these cushion losing hazards the after-position of the object-ball can never be so accurately provided for as is the case of a direct ball-to-ball contact. The greater demand upon the cue-ball—it has to take a cushion, find the right part of the object-ball, and then reach the depths of the pockets—the more difficult must any stroke of necessity be.

Another form of losing hazard into the top pockets profitably playable from the D is the run-through reverse “side” stroke, when the object is frozen to the side cushion. If not quite so easy of execution as the foregoing shots, it cannot be said to be beyond the compass of the average player. “Drag” and reverse “side” to either of the top pockets are the needs of the cue-ball—and a dead full contact with the resting object-ball. Dropping full on the face of the latter the cue-ball will inevitably find the pocket, the “side” materially helping in the process. You will find in all these run-through losing hazards that the straighter the cue-ball can be aimed at the object-ball the more satisfactory will the latter’s subsequent placing be. After being driven on

to the top cushion it will run down the table, keeping a line which will take it to the centre, or thereabouts. In both of the run-through strokes illustrated on Fig. 140 the cue-ball can be lying as straight as it is possible to place it with the object-ball. The more directly the cue-ball comes at it and takes it in the face, the more will the object-ball keep to the centre of the table—the main idea of every after-position of the object-ball in losing-hazard play. The wider you lay the cue-ball for these run-through strokes when the object-ball is on the cushion, the more will the latter be thrown over to the other side of the table. In two ways the straighter stroke is the best. First of all, it does not require so much force to keep the cue-ball “in” to the cushion as a straighter aligned ball does. The straighter the line the ball falling upon the cushion comes from, the less likely is it to get away from the side cushion in its run to the corner pocket. Without my having to remind you of it, there is the incontestable second rule that the more gently you play upon an object-ball the more certainly you guide it to the point you desire it to go.

Now we come to the wider placing of the cue-ball and its deficiencies. For one thing, the wideness of the angle used is always liable to take the object-ball across the table, instead of bringing it down the middle. Then the extra pace the wide angle demands is always an element of danger. It may take the object-ball behind the baulk line—to stay there—or it may lead to complications with one or other of the middle pockets or the “angles” surrounding them. Thus from all points of view it is better—and, what is more, is “the game”—to

make the "run-throughs" by getting as straight to the object-ball as the restrictions of baulk will allow you.

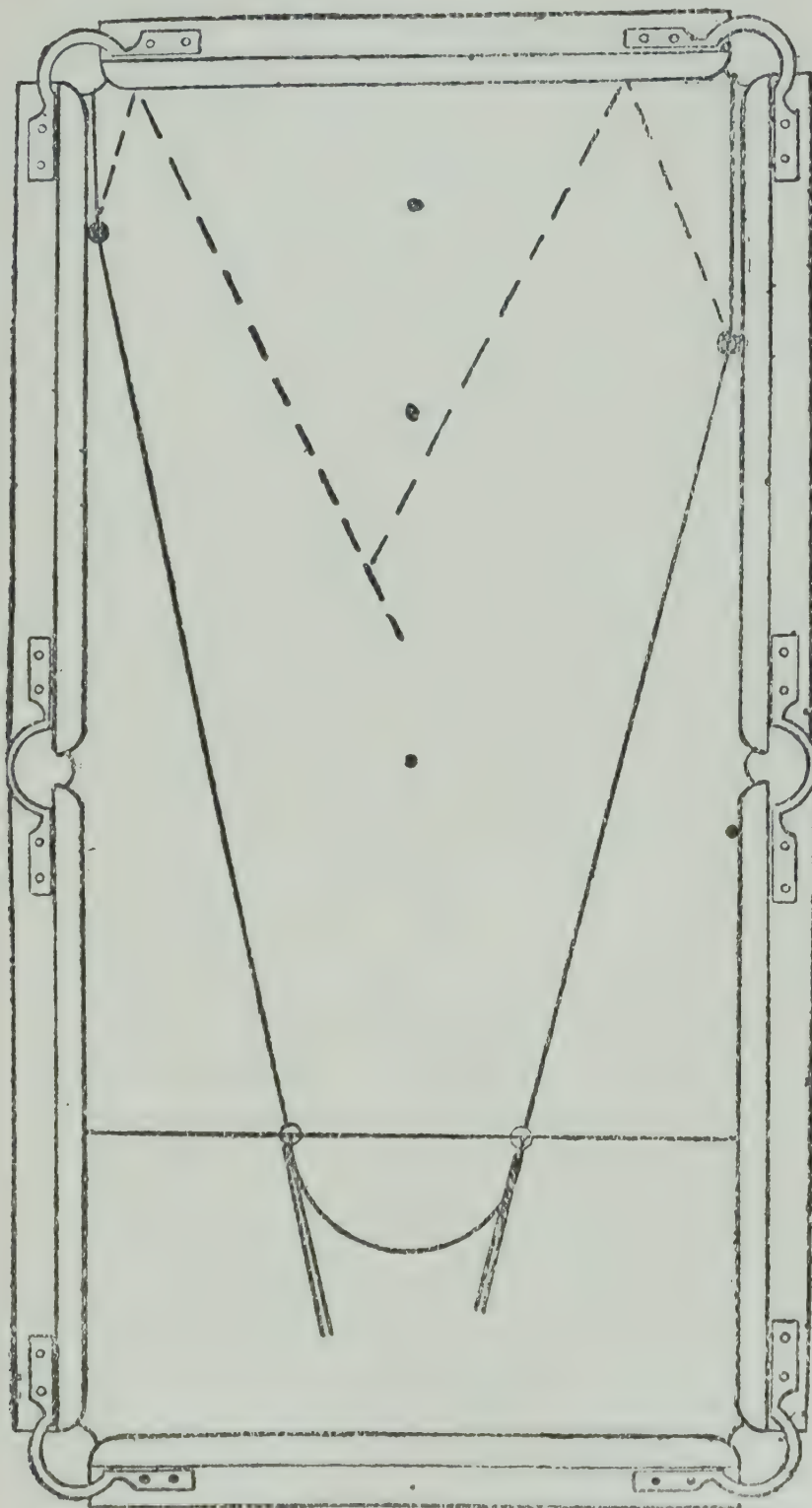


FIG. 140.—Run-through losing hazards.

Losing hazards of many varieties may be made off

balls closely situated by the middle pockets. Often enough it will be found that in the course of a "losing-hazard break" your object-ball will take up such positions as those represented on Fig. 141. Over both middle pockets I have placed a red ball, permitting a simple losing hazard into them. It is not now a question of the making of the losing hazard—any one who can strike a ball, of course, should seldom or never fail—but of the disposal of the red ball. In the right middle pocket there is an optional stroke on the red. It can either be cut thinly on to the top cushion, or be taken fully, so as to cause it to fall against the upper "shoulder" of the pocket, which will send it to the middle of the table. I have shown the line that the red ball will take in each instance, and the placing of the cue-ball required to give it the needed direction. Stroke 1, with the cue-ball to the right of the D for the thin stroke; stroke 2, however, demands the cue-ball being played from the left side of the baulk half-circle. By placing it there you are enabled to drive the red ball fully on to the middle pocket's upper "shoulder." In the first stroke you play to make the red ball avoid it, but now it is the latter's objective point. Of these two strokes, the fuller one is much the more reliable. In the first place, it upholds my rule of preferring thick shots to thin ones in directing an object-ball in losing-hazard play from the D. As I have often pointed out, the full shot permits of the cue-ball taking the pocket gently—a distinct advantage—and it is considerably easier to gauge the "strength" required on your object-ball by a full shot than a thin one. Try both and judge for yourselves. The other drawback to the thin shot is

the fact that the cue-ball, meeting with so little resist-

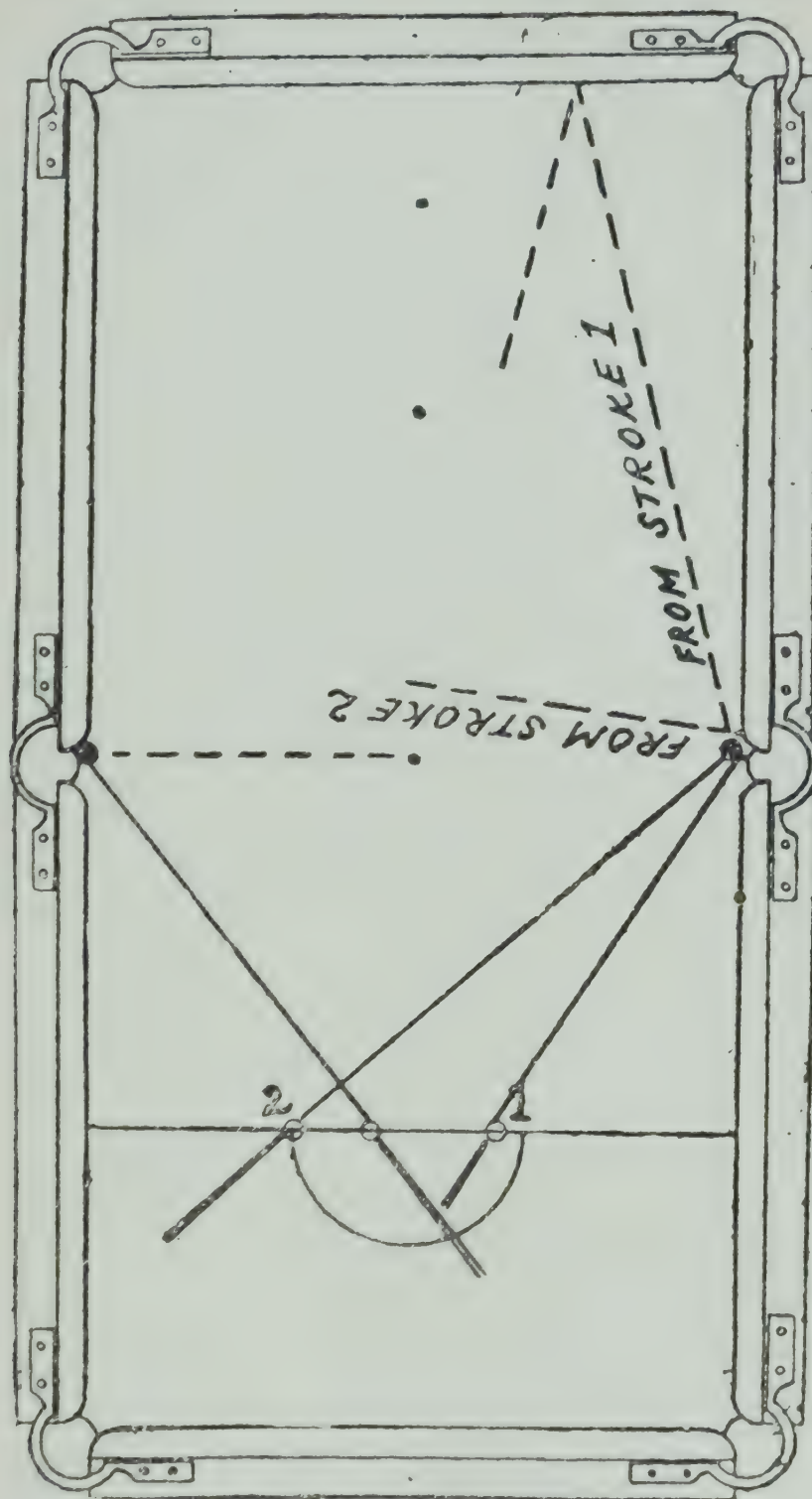


FIG. 141.—Easy losing hazards, the feature of which are the guidance of the object-balls to favourable positions.

ance from the object-ball, must go fast at the pocket. And in all hazard play it is any odds on the slow ball

finding a pocket against a fast one, especially in the case of the middle pockets.

There is also on Fig. 141 a ball lying "frozen" on the upper "shoulder" of the left middle pocket. Play the losing hazard gently from any part of the D, and it must go out to the middle of the table as the figure indicates. The "angle" of the pocket will always throw the ball off in that direction.

Fig. 142 shows the object-ball taken further away from the middle pocket, but kept in a line with the centre of the latter. Again, in losing-hazard play the optional full or thin stroke may be made, and again the first-named brings the best results in its train. The full stroke is shown into the left middle pocket, the red being directed out to the middle of the table by the medium of the top-side and top cushions. The stroke altogether surpasses the thin one that is at the disposal of the player. This is shown in the right middle pocket. For reasons previously given, the full stroke in purely losing-hazard play, is best for the guidance and control of the object-ball in the instances I have given. The thin stroke is particularly uncertain in both respects.

Fig. 143 brings to notice a very useful double-strength "screw" losing hazard that not infrequently crops up amid your more defined "losers." As will be seen, the object-ball is situated above the pocket. To get in off it the cue-ball is placed at the other side of the D. Use plenty of "screw" and pace, and place the cue under your forefinger to give more "screwing" power to it. Drive the red as straight on to the top side cushion as you can, getting, in fact, an almost full

contact with it. Watch its course around the table

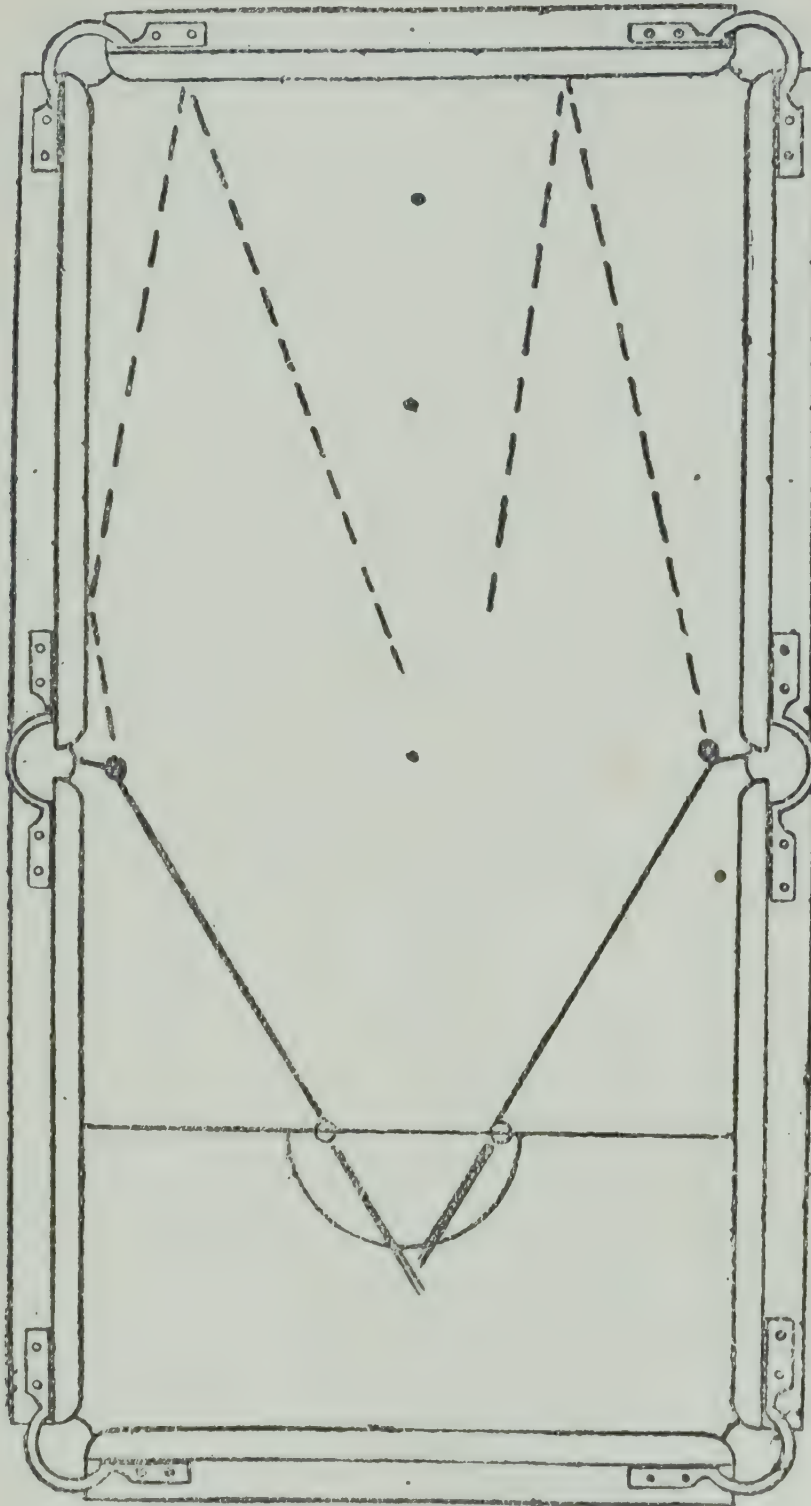


FIG. 142.—The full and the thin contacts.

after you have made the stroke. From the top side cushion it goes obliquely on to the top cushion. Thence,

it travels *via* the right baulk cushion to stop near the spot it started from—a complete circuit of the table. This is a very useful shot to have at your command. It is comparatively simple, yet so very effective in guiding the object-ball into play again. The chief thing of which to take notice is the placing of the cue-ball. The further the object-ball lies away from the cushion rail, the further to the other side of the D will the cue-ball have to be placed to accurately steer the former around the board as desired. The quicker you cause it to take to the side cushion after it has been struck, the better the stroke. You play three-quarter-ball on it. Some practice with this stroke will be of no little value to the amateur average player, as it affords a nice object-lesson in some of the angles that the table throws.

Fig. 144 is devoted to losing hazards off the object-white, when the latter covers up a direct entrance for the cue-ball to the middle pockets. On the right, the object-white can be seen resting on or very close to the lower “shoulder,” dead on that part of it joining the cushion’s straight alignment. There is no need to put it in, as a losing hazard of the “run-through” variety can be made with sufficient ease as to warrant its being played whenever the opportunity permits. With pocket side—in this case right “side”—on your ball, you aim the latter to find the middle of the pocket through the centre of the object-white—playing from about the centre spot of the D. As the balls come into collision, the object-white shoots off up the table in an almost parallel line with the side cushion, leaving an open pocket for the spinning cue-ball.

gained by another run-through stroke. Play gently, almost full on the object-white, to send the latter on the pocket's upper "shoulder," which will send it out to the middle of the table and guarantee the cue-ball successfully making the shot. The action of the middle-pocket "shoulders" in these and similar strokes is decidedly instructive and entertaining, for they are as much "on" when the cue-ball is in a set position as when it is played from the D. Prettier effects there cannot be obtained, and many a big "break" has materialized by a bold stroke of this description being tried. The pocket "angles," corners or middles, have a greater influence upon the making of hazards, especially losing hazards, than even those who know the effect that pocket "side" has upon them are fully aware of.

Fig. 145 still treats of run-through shots off an object-white guarding a middle pocket. Both examples now shown, however, have it placed further away from the pockets than in the preceding ones. Here the pocket "angles" play no part at all. The object-ball is taken from the entrance to the pocket by a run-through contact of the cue-ball, which passes over the ground on which it stood. Made to take the side cushion as quickly as possible, the object-ball must work its way out to the middle of the table, as the run of the balls on the figure goes to show.

In losing-hazard play the average amateur shrinks from trying to score from a ball which is "tight up" against a cushion, unless he is making a "run-through" stroke of it. Even if he attempts to play on such a ball he does so in a half-hearted way, and by the use of the uncertain "kiss" stroke. He is not aware of a most

important fact that helps him beyond measure when he runs up against such "leaves." This is that *by playing a*

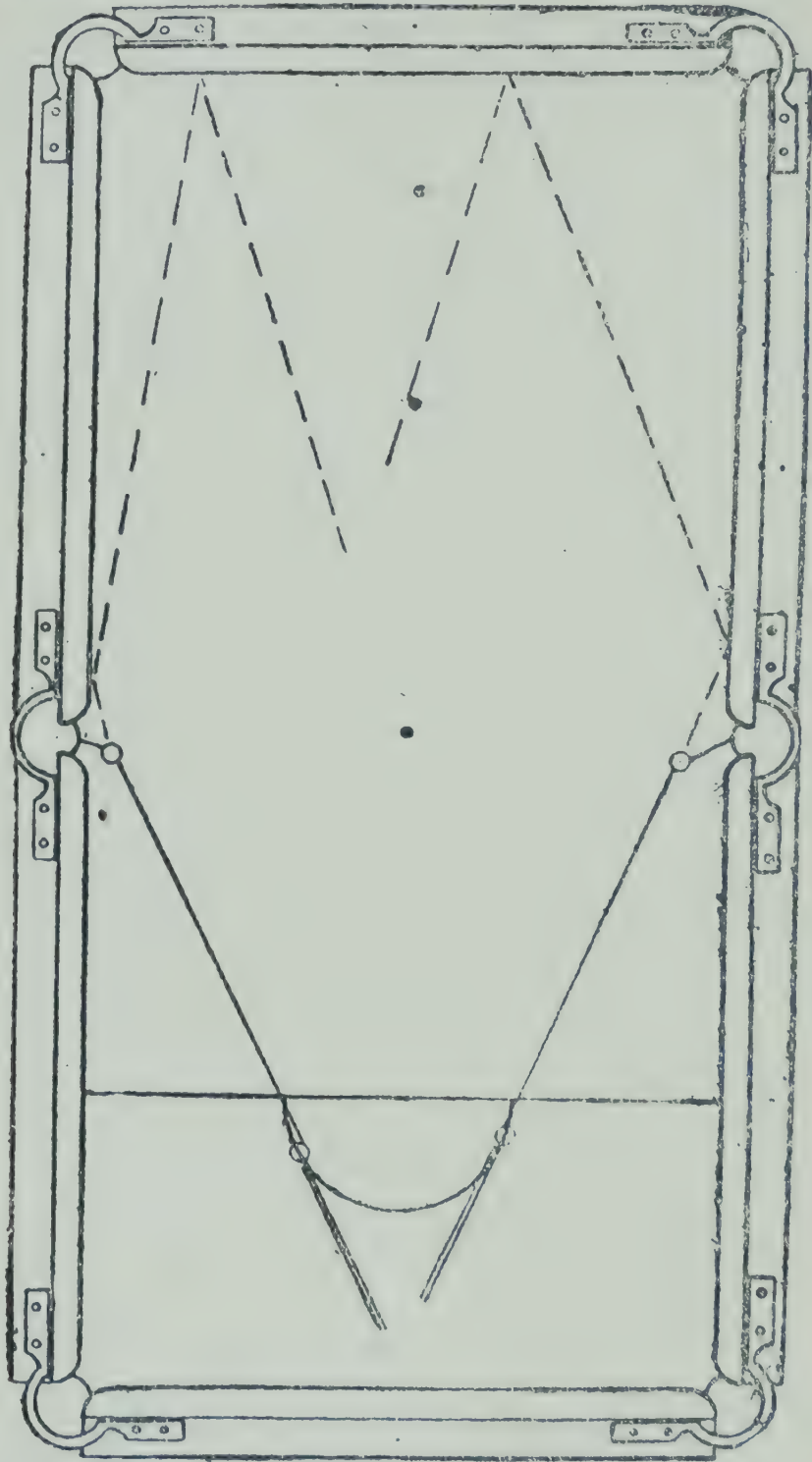


FIG. 145.—Further follow-through shots.

fast ball you can make the cue-ball take the same angle from a ball "frozen" to a cushion as though it lay right

out on the bed of the table. I do not exaggerate in the least when I say so, as you can gauge for yourselves. Take the stroke shown on Fig. 146. Here we have the red ball "frozen" or "tight up" against an end cushion, and three different degrees of pace strokes played upon it, each and all of the half-ball variety. The angle at which the cue-ball is projected after contact with the red is plainly indicated in each case. A slow ball is

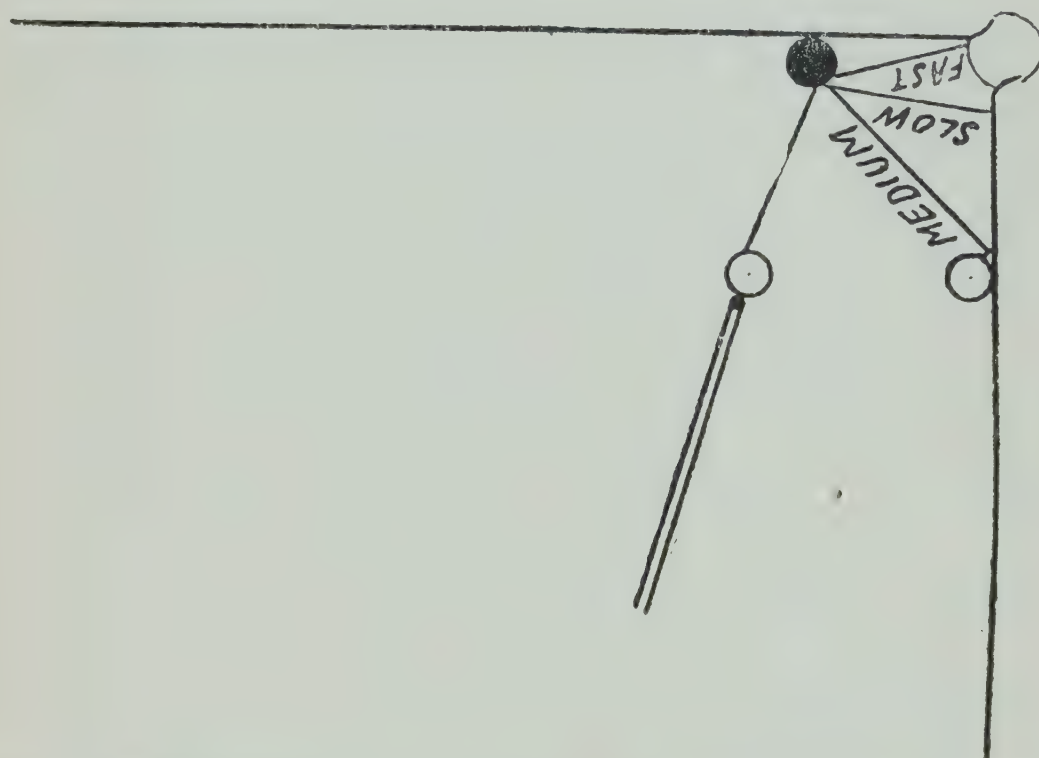


FIG. 146.—Rebound of the cue-ball, at different paces, from a ball "tight" to a cushion.

thrown at very nearly right angles over to the side cushion, and the medium pace stroke sends the cue-ball on to the same rail but considerably further down the table. In both cases the cue-ball has been "kissed" out of the natural angle that it would ordinarily take from an object-ball. It does not get away from the point at which it struck the red ball in time to escape the rebounding action that the cushion gives to it.

This action of the cushion is simple and always bound to occur. The blow the object-ball receives presses

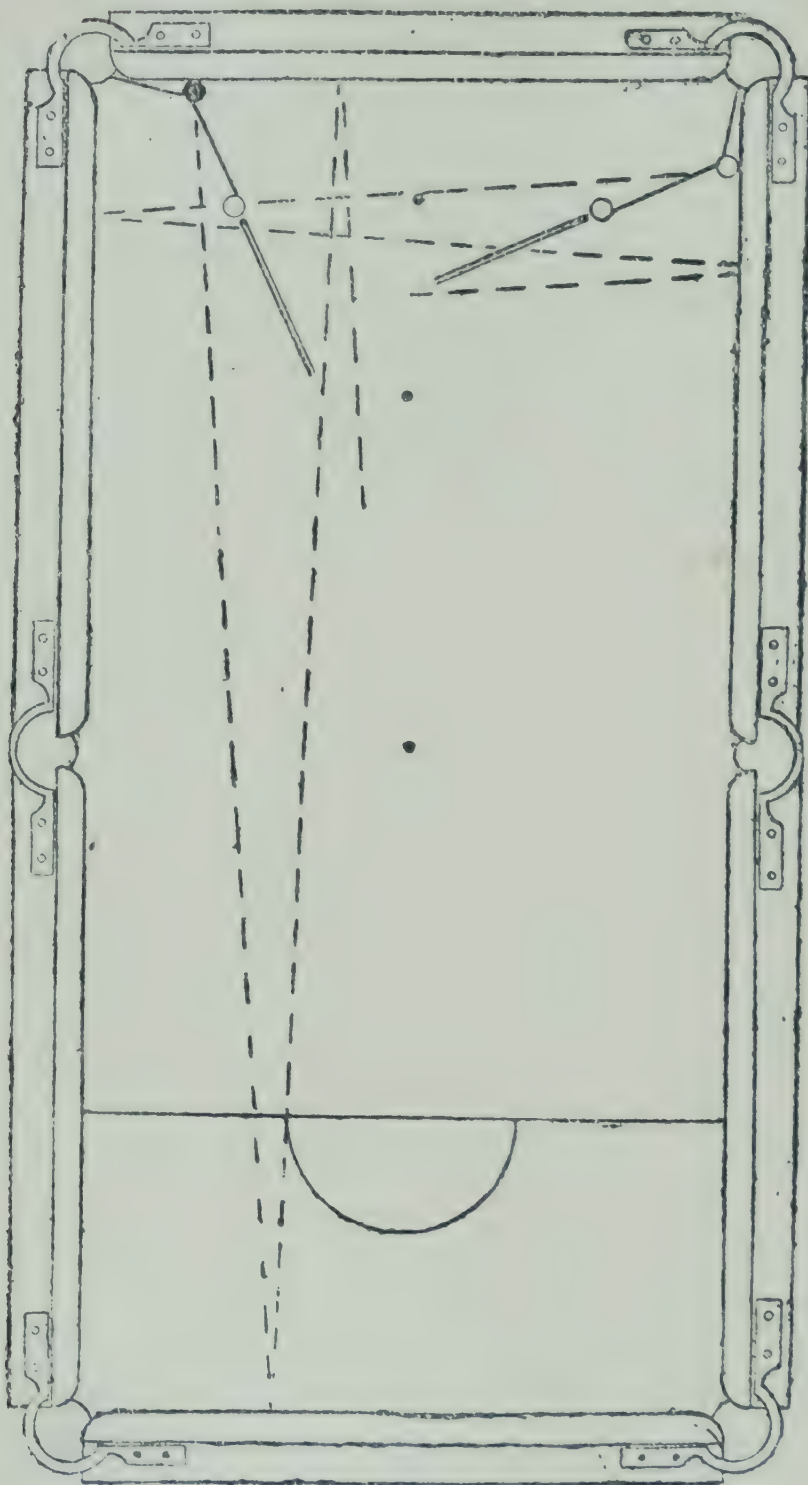


FIG. 147.—Forcing in off a ball "tight" to the cushion.

it into the cushion's rubber folds, and they throw it out again very smartly. Thus, unless the cue-ball flits

rapidly across the face of the object-ball it has no chance of avoiding the "kiss." Use a fast ball, however, and you can make half-ball strokes off a ball that is touching a cushion without fear of a "kiss." The great pace that you impart to your ball gets it past the object-ball before the latter comes back from its pressure into the cushion rubber. Anywhere up to a half-ball contact—it is dangerous to try and take the object-ball more fully—this fast ball stroke holds good on any part of the cushion rails.

Several variants of this kind of stroke may be of interest, so I put them forward. Fig. 147 provides a couple of top pocket strokes from balls frozen to the cushion. The cue-ball is "smacked" very forcibly against the object-ball—just a plain ball, for no "side" is needed—to find the pocket at express speed. Much velocity, too, is emitted to the object-ball, which either runs down and up the bed of the table, or across it according to the stroke that is played, with plenty of motive power.

Strokes of this kind can also be played from the D, as per Fig. 148. Naturally, they are more difficult than the two preceding strokes, but only by reason of the greater distance intervening between cue-ball and object-ball. So much depends on the player getting nicely hold of the object-ball, that he has to guard against too full a contact. For a ball lying "tight" on a cushion is a very sensitive object, and will not tolerate anything approaching a central blow. Any point on its sides, with the half-ball contact as the maximum of fulness, is safe, so long as you give plenty of pace to your ball.

Examples of middle-pocket losing hazards from a

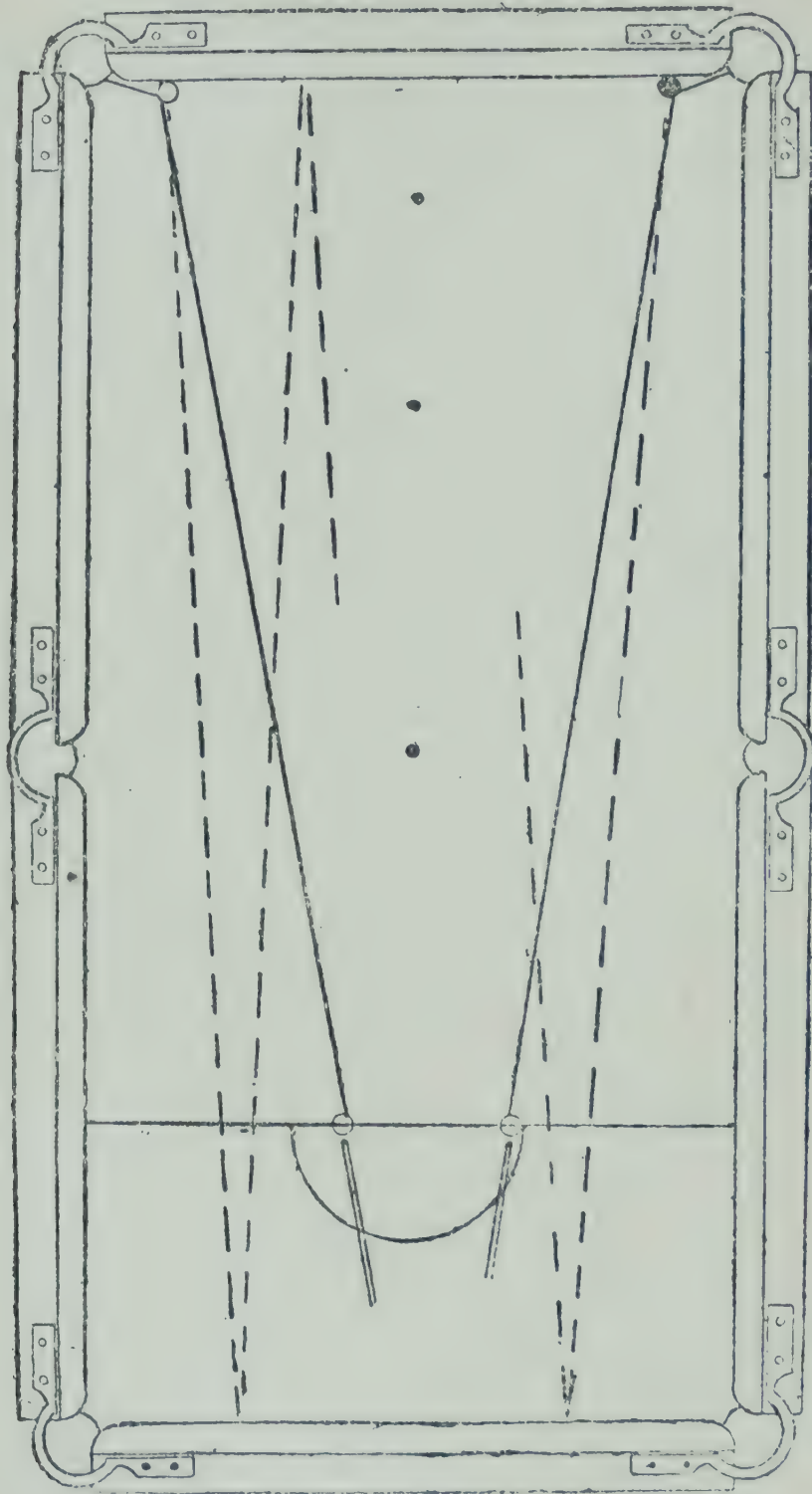


FIG. 148.—Double-strength losing hazards.

ball touching a cushion are to be seen on Fig. 149. They may be played more slowly than any of the

others I have been commenting upon. In these two

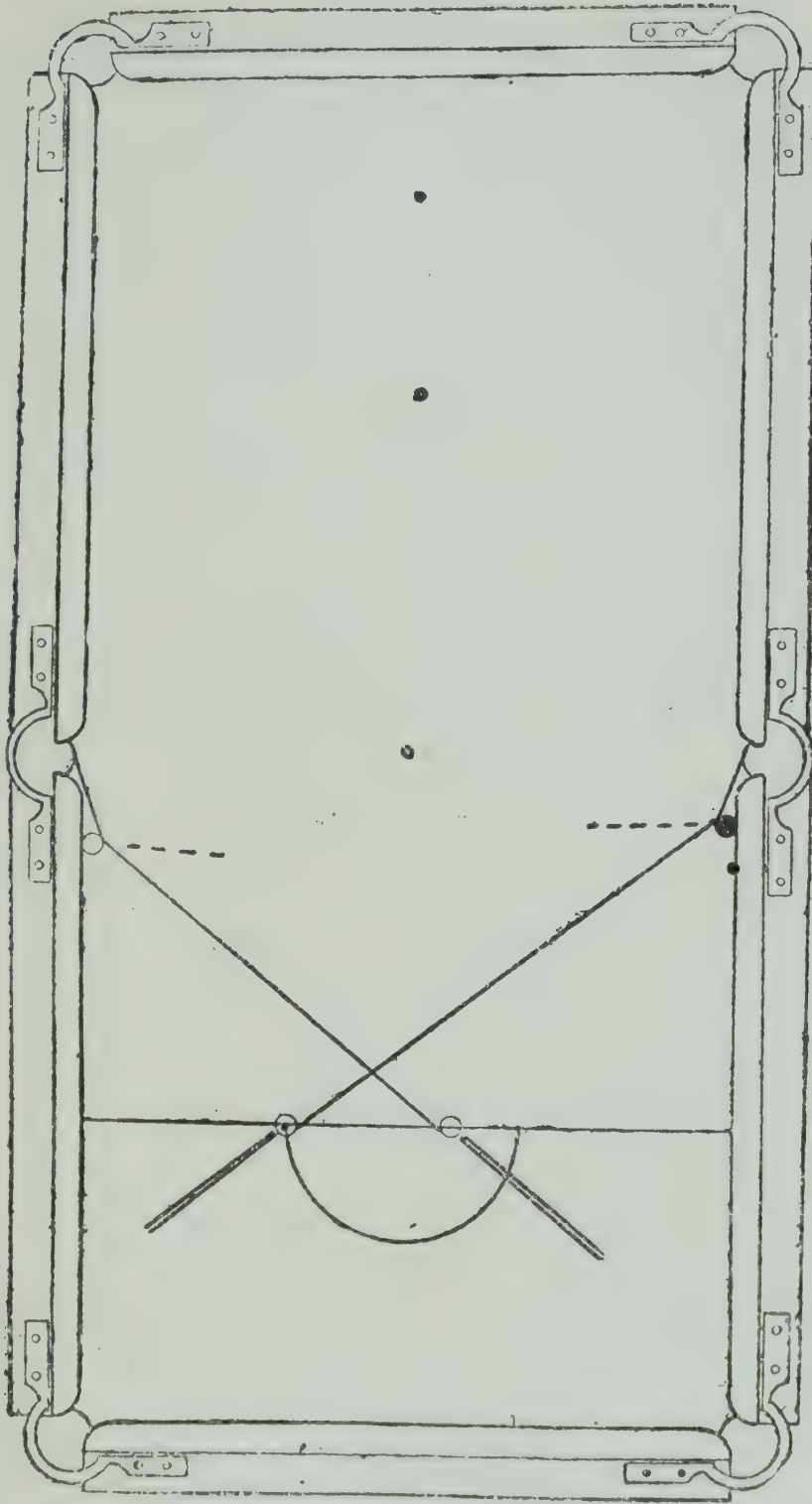


FIG. 149—The thinnest of thin middle-pocket losing hazards.

middle-pocket hazards, “side”—that is, pocket “side”—will be found a useful factor towards the making

of the losing hazard. An important point, too, to be

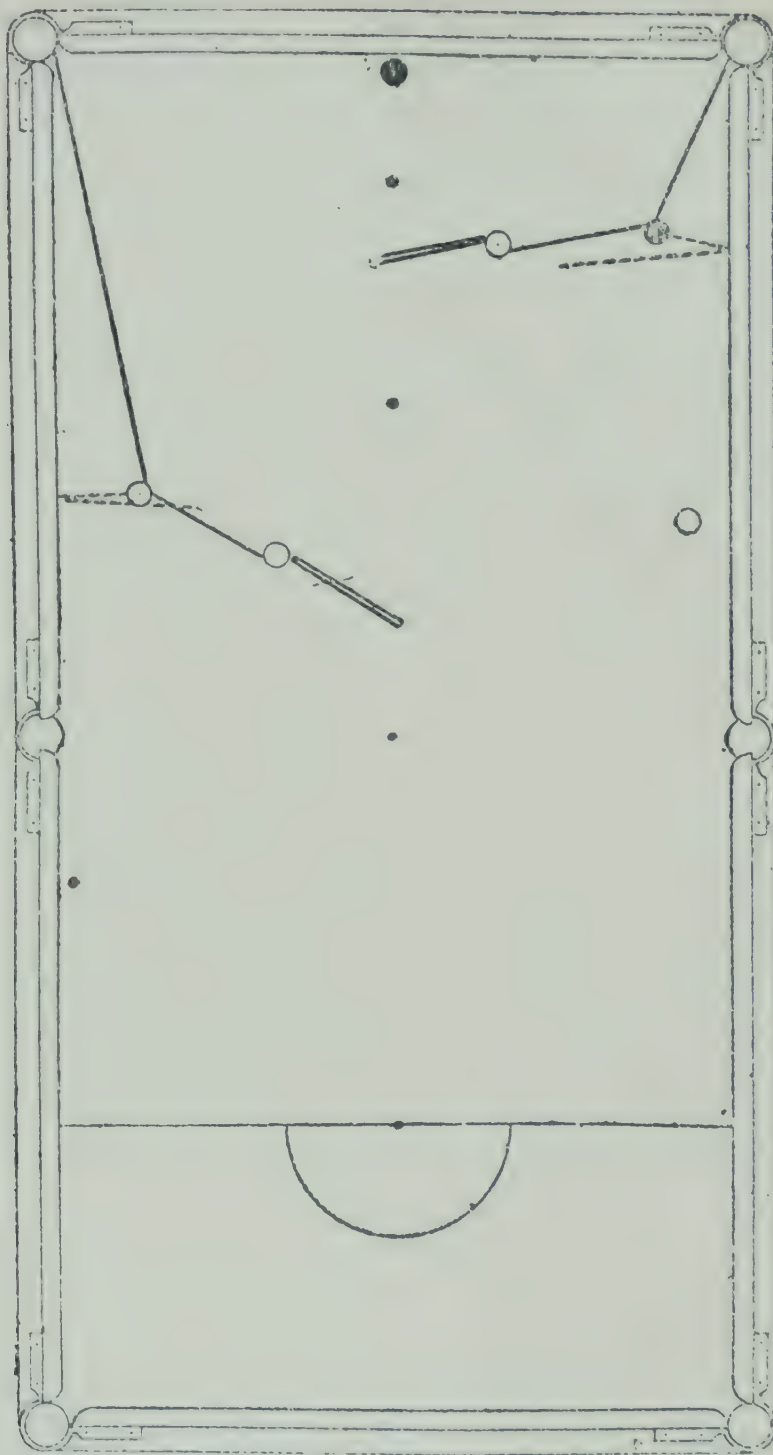


FIG. 150.—Using running “side” instead of force for corner pockets, as dictated by the position of the second object-ball; the drop-cannon “leave” is the idea in each case.

borne in mind, is to give the lower “shoulder” of the pocket as little opportunity as it is possible to do

to interfere with your stroke. Arrange your ball so that the lower "shoulder" is hidden from you behind the object-ball. If you have room enough to make the losing hazard, you have room enough to shut out the protruding lower "shoulder." In other words, you have to make the stroke as thinly as you possibly can. Try to just skim the object-ball. These strokes are not easy ones, but with a very little practice a fair amount of proficiency can be attained in making them.

Anyhow, it may be of interest to my readers to know that a ball "frozen" on a cushion is not the dead ball many of them have always taken it to be.

There are many and many different varieties of losing hazards to be found in the open field of play which may be made at single and double strength. Useful specimens of the kind are to be found on Fig. 150. Either top-pocket losing hazard would require forcing with a plain-ball stroke. But they may be effected equally as well with a slow, strong running "side" ball. The necessities of after-position will determine which of the two strokes it will be best to make use of.

Fig. 151 serves to show how important a part the shoulders of the pockets may take in the course of a game. Both the middle-pocket strokes illustrate the "saving" of the object-white by what are quite simple little strokes. The left-pocket losing hazard is made by first striking the lower "shoulder," using plenty of running "side," and a very slow ball. Over at the opposite middle pocket there is a gentle "run-through" the object-white, which sends it out to the centre of the table after contact with the further "shoulder." The action of the object-ball's rebound from a pocket

“shoulder” is of considerable value to learn. Different

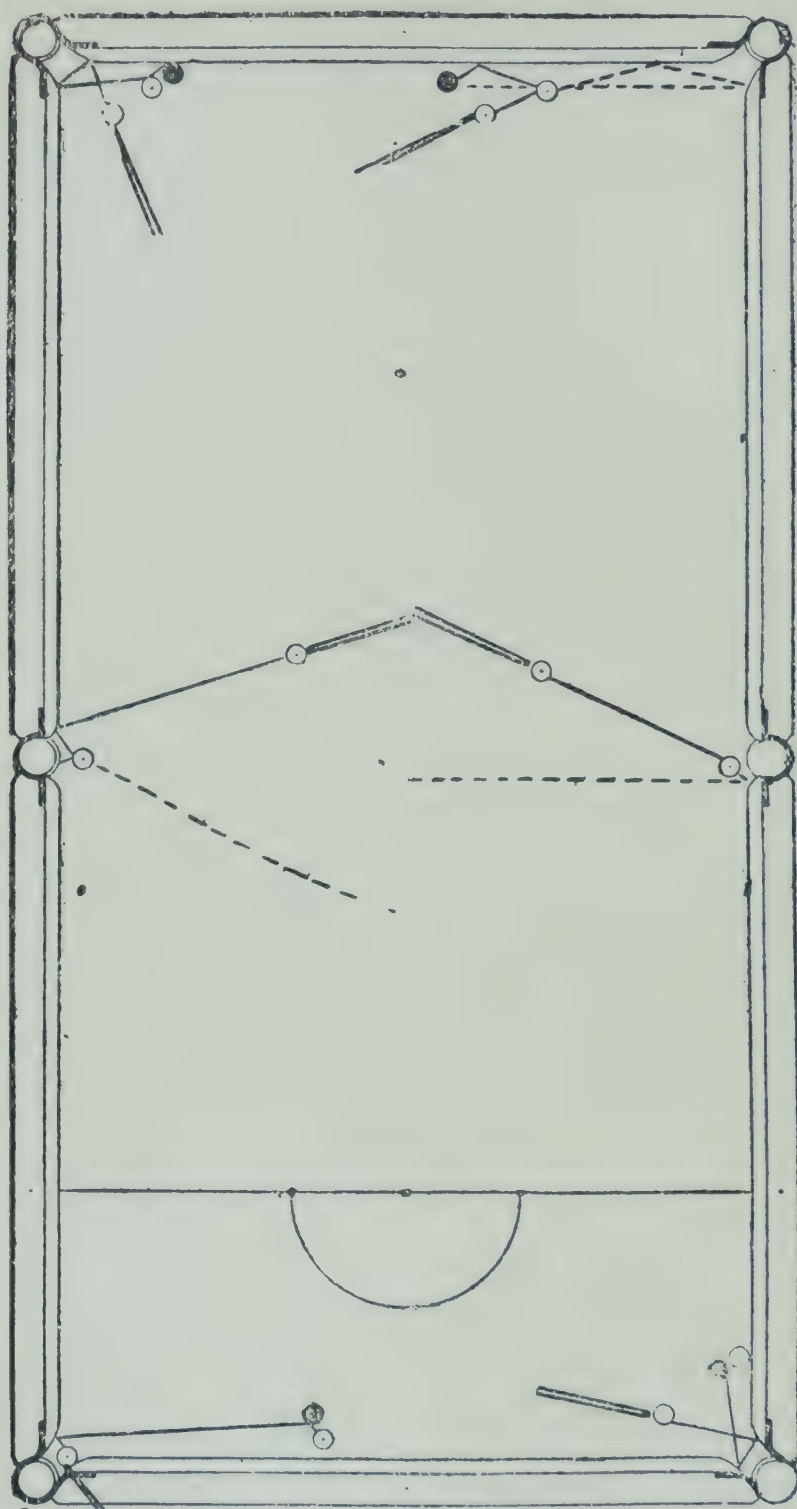


FIG. 151.—Various strokes in which the “shoulders” of the pockets are employed.

paces will create different rebounding angles, just as from the straight line of the cushion. Such losing

hazards often help one out of a serious difficulty. Where the ordinary player would unceremoniously "pocket the white," the better informed may continue in safe possession of the table by means of a run-through or cushion shot on the lines I have described.

The four corner-pocket shots on Fig. 151 continue to bear testimony to the helpfulness of the pocket "shoulders." In baulk there are two cannons shown which, but for the use of the "shoulders," would tax the powers of the best cueist ever seen. By a judicious administration of "side" they are, however, easily overcome. The left-pocket stroke shows the cue-ball "angled"—that is, it lies so far inside the pocket "shoulders" as to prevent it obtaining a direct passage to either object-ball. By playing at medium pace off the point of the side-cushion "shoulder," and using plenty of left "side," the cue-ball will rebound in a right-angle direction along by the end cushion, and so cannon. The right baulk-pocket cannon is a trifle more intricate, for here both pocket "shoulders" have to be struck. Using right "side," the cue-ball is played on to the side-cushion "shoulder"; thence it goes on to the end-cushion "shoulder," and from there up and along by the side cushion to cannon.

The left top-pocket cannon is in the same nature as the last-mentioned, so it requires no description. Treating of the "screw" cannon at the other top corner of the table, there is nothing novel in the actual scoring stroke; but it is the return of the object-white, the first-played object-ball, from the "shoulder" of the corner pocket which is the great feature. Being driven slantingly on to the top cushion, it runs almost directly on to

the point of the side-cushion "shoulder," which promptly throws it back in the direction it came from. As a

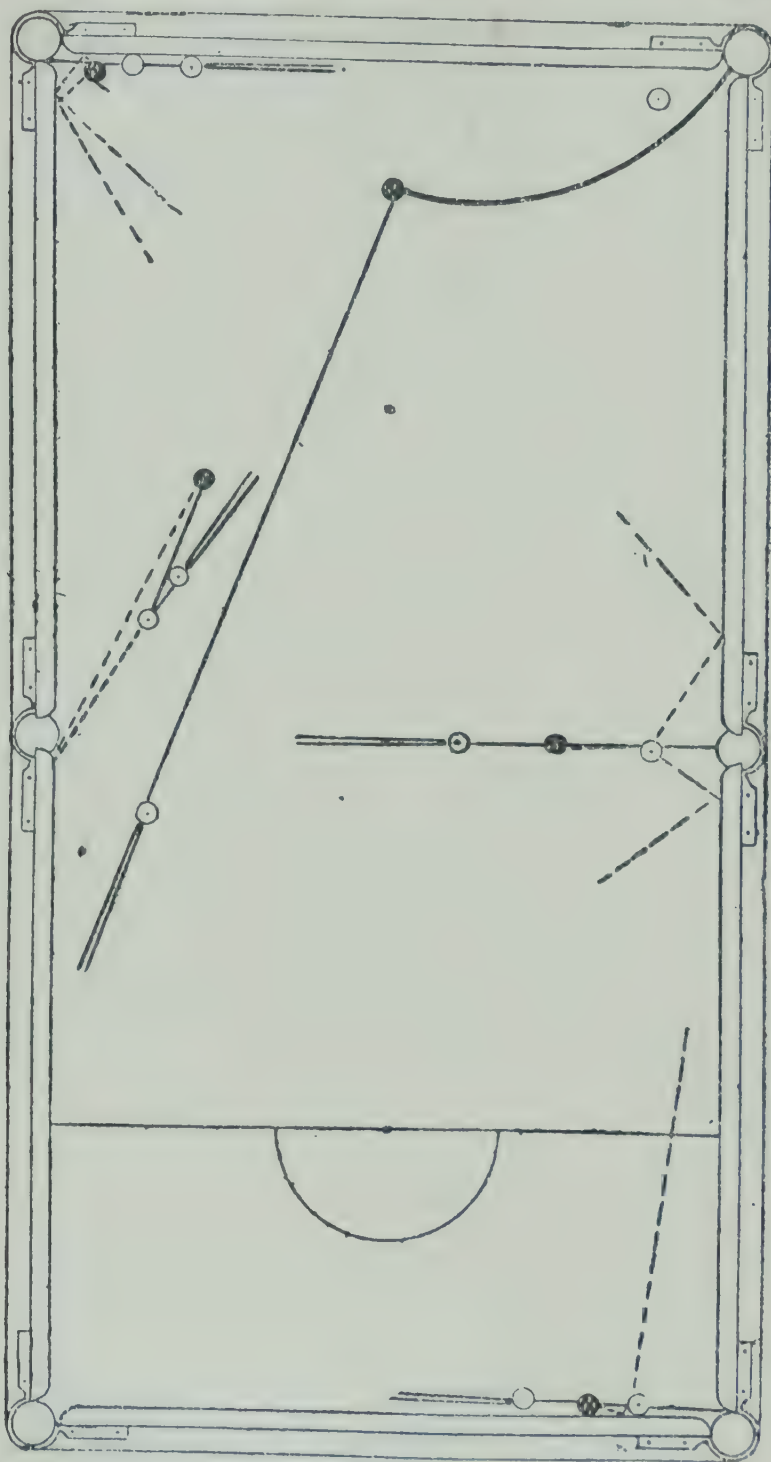


FIG. 152.—A miscellany of pocket-play.

result, it runs somewhere in the vicinity of the red, to make the "leave" in accordance with the best principles of cannon-play.

A similar stroke is to be seen on Fig. 152, where the first object-ball is thrown back from a middle-pocket "shoulder." The right top-pocket losing hazard from the spotted red ball shows the curving sweep taken by the cue-ball in a forcing shot of this kind. To more strongly emphasize this, a white ball is placed in what would appear to be the cue-ball's direct pathway to the pocket. But as the ball makes a wide arc on flying off the red, the white does not offer any obstruction to its passage. This movement of the cue-ball after contact with an object-ball occurs in every class of stroke. It does not reach its true path until the force of the concussion with the object-ball is spent. In cannoning with the two object-balls lying close to each other this rebounding action has to be allowed for.

The three remaining strokes on Fig. 151, those respectively over the left top, the right top, and right baulk pockets, are of an identical pattern. Each represents a position in which the two object-balls lie covered in front of the cue-ball. If they are not in a perfectly straight line a very pretty run-through losing hazard may be made. The idea is to take no notice at all of the second object-ball, but play straight through the first one. The two object-balls will collide and split apart, leaving an open passage for the cue-ball to reach the pocket.

Some very useful losing hazards are to be seen on Fig. 153. By the baulk-end cushion there is shown a slow, half-ball "screw" into the left corner pocket. Left "side," that is, strong pocket "side," is used. The cue must be moved briskly before the stroke, and the ball hit quite lightly. Two different hazards are given

as being made from an object-ball into the left top

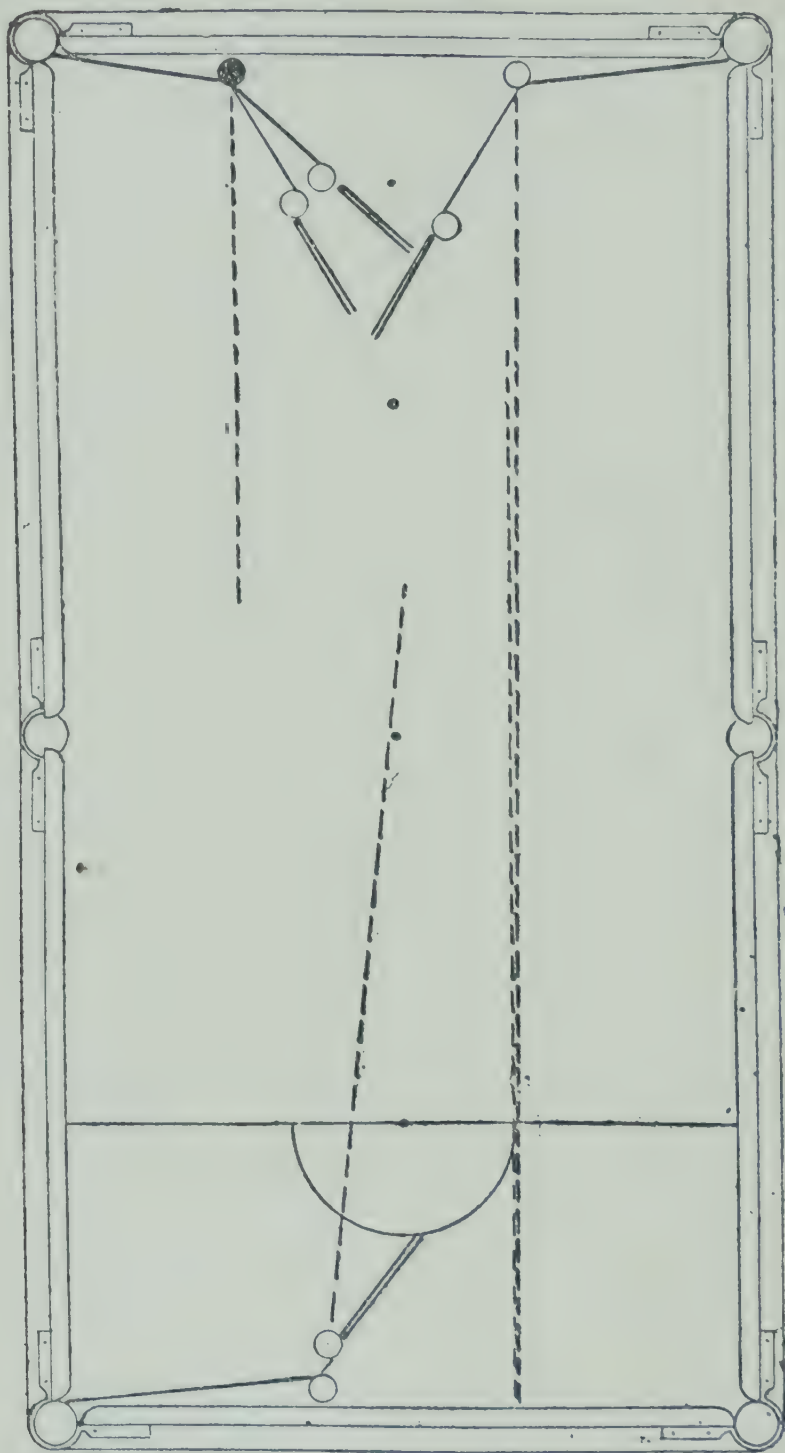


FIG. 153.—“Screw,” “side,” and “top” losing hazards along by the cushions.

pocket. Both the contacts are at half-ball. By using left “side” with the lower placed of the two cue-balls,

the hazard may be made at single strength, although the angle from ball to pocket is much wider than the natural half-ball one. With the other ball, the one nearest the top cushion, the use of right "side" turns the half-ball contact into a much more narrow angle. In either case it will be seen that the object-ball travels to the same destination. The value of "side" in these and similar strokes cannot be over-estimated. It is invaluable for the purpose of "leaving" the balls. The forcing losing hazard into the right top pocket exemplifies another fine and serviceable shot. In all such high-speed (the object-ball has to be sent through baulk) hazards the finding of the pocket is immensely helped by hitting the cue-ball well above its centre. The "top" thus imparted makes it swing out, and then in again to take the pocket at its widest part. An ordinary centre-ball shot would be made at a half-opened pocket, but the "top" practically admits of the latter being attacked from the line of the billiard-spot. Try the stroke in both ways, and appreciate the advantage that "top" gives.

Fig. 154 contains an imposing array of pocket strokes, in each and all of which the object-ball is lying right in front of the receptacle. Those made into the four lower pockets are of the same kind. The two inside the baulk line are forcing "run-throughs," driving the object-ball on to the further "shoulder," whence it goes on to the opposite one, and then runs out of baulk. It often takes an experienced player to discriminate the possible from the impossible. But a good eye will tell whether there is "room" to get the object-ball on to the "shoulder," while allowing the cue-ball to go straight to the pocket.

Of course, if there is a perfectly straight line through

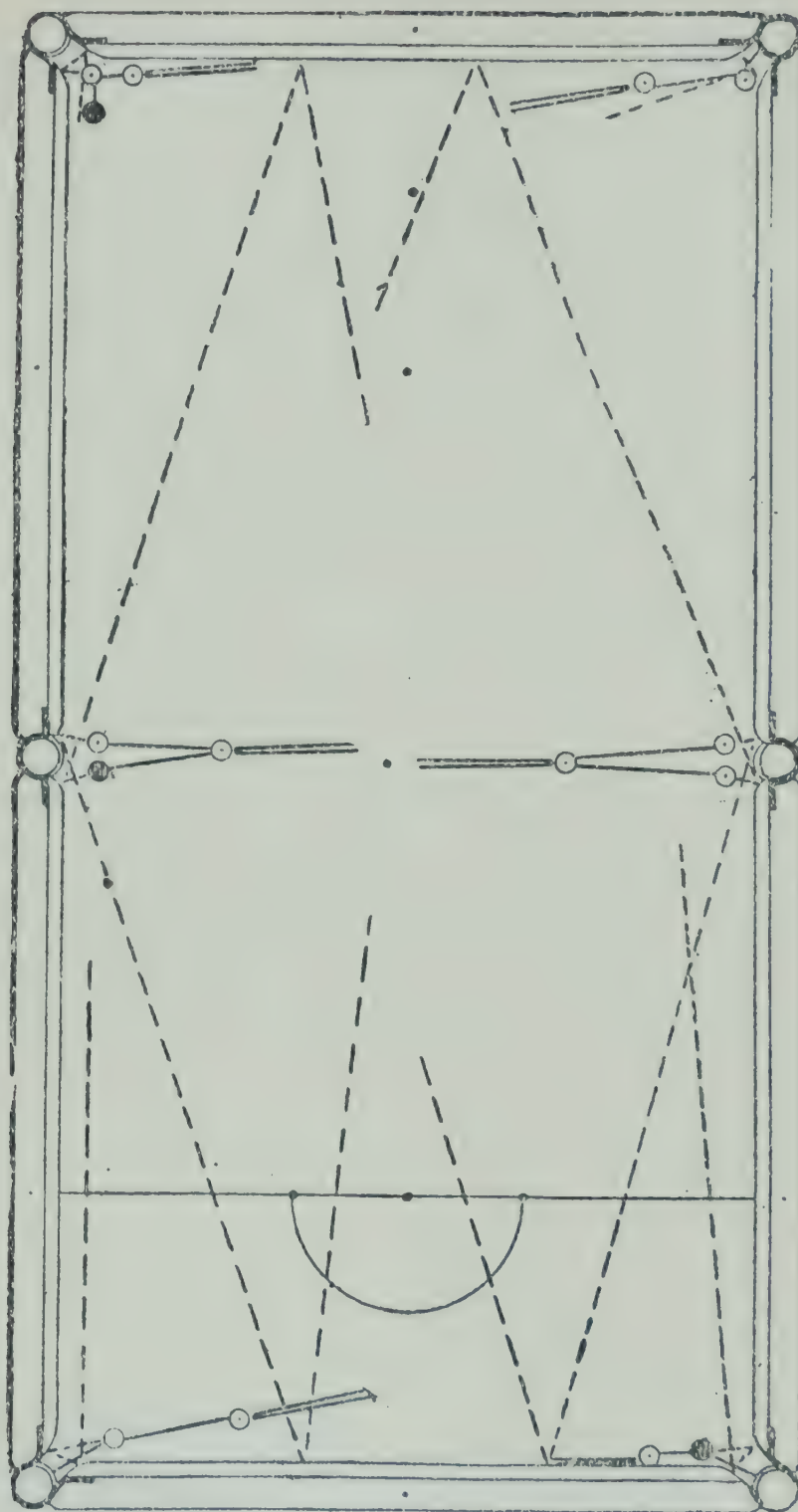


FIG. 154.—A series of pocket "shoulder" strokes.

the centres of the two balls to the middle of the pocket, the "potting" of the object-ball is inevitable. The

stroke must, of necessity, be a fast one, so as to clear the object-ball out of the way. If played slowly, or even at medium pace, a "kiss" will almost surely occur.

The two middle-pocket strokes are played on exactly the same principle. If the object-ball lies right over the centre of the pocket opening, the losing hazard will only be made possible by putting down the object-ball, with the cue-ball lying directly behind it, as shown. But if away to the right or left of the pocket's centre, a forcing "run-through" is not only "on," but quite easy. The upper "shoulder" will send the object-ball to the baulk end, and the lower "shoulder" to the top end, of the table.

By the right top pocket there is a very pretty "double-kiss" losing hazard, which may often be employed to good purpose. With the object-ball standing in the jaws of a pocket, yet away from either "shoulder," there is often a possibility of this stroke being made. A half-ball opening between the ball and the cushion by which the cue-ball is standing is sufficient. Play very slowly at the object-ball, with the idea of sending it full on to the further "shoulder." The cue-ball will take the lower "shoulder" after contact, and the object-ball, thrown back again by the "shoulder," which it strikes fairly, squeezes the former into the pocket. Tap-tap! the balls go, and provide as attractive an effect as any to be seen on the billiard-table. The cannon stroke by the left top pocket has been already shown in the "close-cannons" chapter.

Fig. 155 explains the peculiar influence that the "nap" of the cloth exercises over a slow-running ball. Playing against the grain of the cloth, that is, towards

the baulk end of the table, a slow-running ball drops away

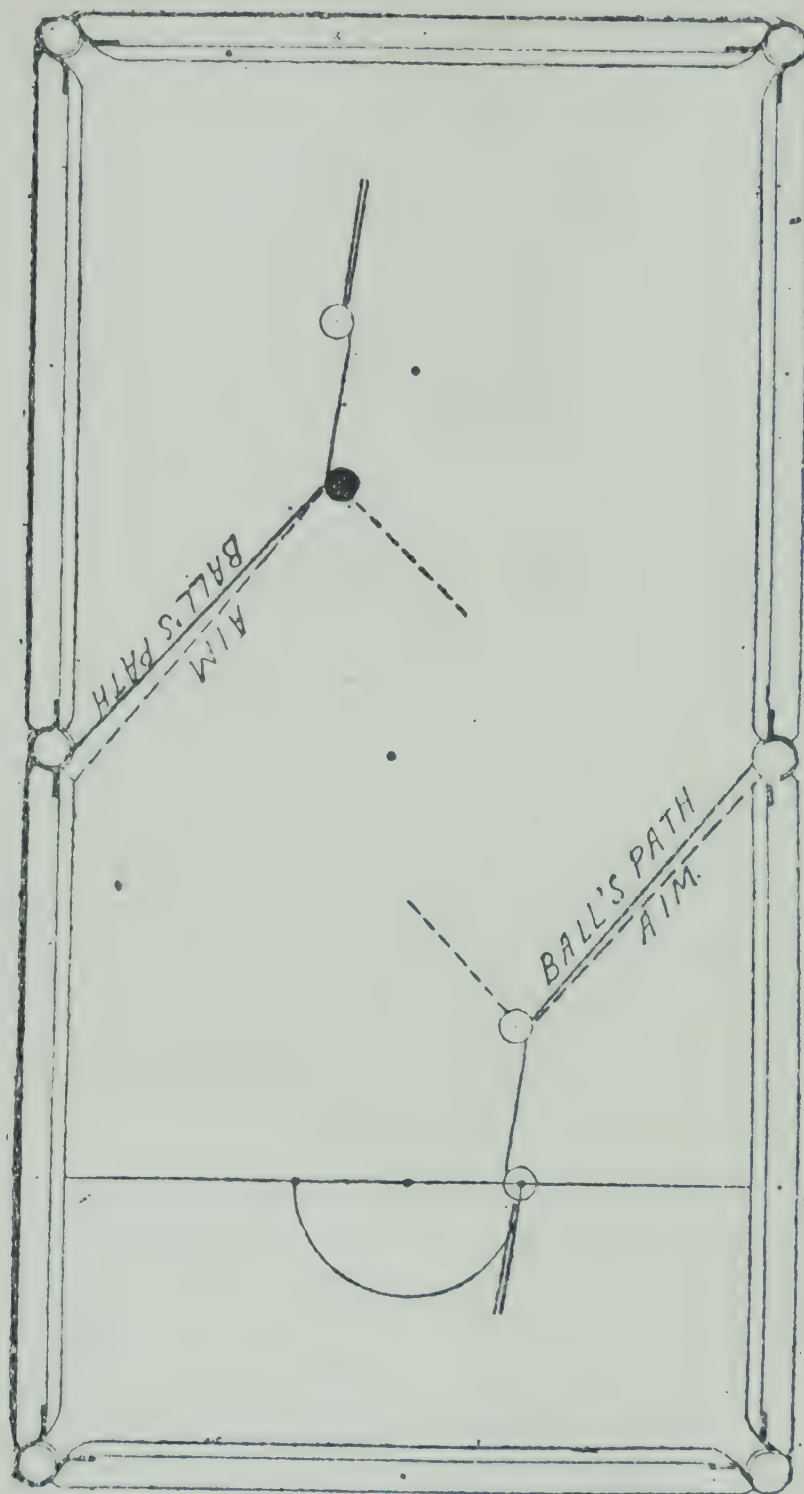


FIG. 155.—The opposite influences of the "nap" of the cloth in slow, oblique middle-pocket strokes.

from the true line of its course. An opposite effect is seen, however, when the ball is travelling towards the

top end of the table. Now a slow-running ball will pull out beyond the line that it at first takes. These divergencies do not occur when the ball travels fast. In no strokes do they tell more than the slow, oblique ones into the middle pockets. Playing from baulk, one has to make allowance for this divergence by *aiming for the nearest "shoulder,"* and from the other end of the table by *aiming for the further "shoulder."* The lines on the diagram will convey the idea of the play.

THE LAST OF THE LOSING-HAZARD GAME.

This article concludes my prolonged treatise on the losing-hazard game and the control of the red ball. I have no more instances to show of purely losing hazards played from the baulk half-circle, and I believe that, in effect, I have treated with most, 'if not all, of the varieties that can take shape. The variations of these, of course, are multitudinous; but having presented the trunk line of the strokes, the offshooting branches should be easily discernible. Familiarity with one set stroke will teach the relationship that others have to it.

I have clung so tenaciously to these losing hazards because I am so satisfied of the value—not realized by even the leading professional players—that they possess. The great power that they exercise—and must inevitably exercise—upon the game, is, in my opinion, the force of the billiards of the future. I incline strongly to the belief that the "top-of-the-table" game has been overdone. Because John Roberts

brought it into fashion, every aspiring professional naturally sought to cultivate it. They were not to blame in this. To see Roberts scoring with ease and celerity and the minimum of exertion could not but attract, and create, imitators of his original methods. They have cropped up in goodly numbers, though, with but a few exceptions, Roberts' high standard has been unapproached.

Everything for the "top of the table" has been the order of going for these past ten years. The hours and hours, and days and weeks and years, that have been mostly wasted in its pursuit by one and another of popular cueists will never be known, though they may be guessed at. And has the quality of first-class billiards improved with it? That is a very open question. For owing to advantages in the way of increased opportunities and ceaseless playing by three or four of the front rank, they have reached a higher plane of ability than their contemporaries of a decade back, John Roberts, naturally, apart from the argument. Better implements, too, have helped in no inconsiderable degree to the somewhat improved state of things. But, withal, I take leave to doubt whether the present standard would not have been higher, or, at least as high, if instead of the "top-of-the-table" game the great professional players had cultivated the simple, but sound, losing-hazard play.

Given a good-class player, who will spend the same amount of time on the losing-hazard game that has been done on the "top-of-the-table" game, I would not like to venture an opinion on what the bounds of his scoring might not be. A few seasons ago Roberts

made many breaks of over 300 with only the red ball upon the table. What might he not have done if he had worked the object-white in combination with the coloured ball? I am certain that, had he adopted such a scoring policy, some really wonderful records would have been created by him in this line. The work may be a trifle more arduous, but it is so sure. The spectators, too, I am convinced, would prefer it to the unknown mysteries of those delicate arrangements inseparable to the play around the billiard spot. It is more their own game, simple and plainly to be understood in all its bearings. What produces livelier satisfaction or more genuine applause than a string of losing hazards off the red ball? Go where you will it is the same. The onlookers are seeing something that they understand, and they appreciate it. Too often the "top-of-the-table" game intricacies are as Greek to them. They know the points are coming, but how it is done they cannot tell. Say what one will the "top-of-the-table" game is rising to a pitch at which it threatens to rival the spot stroke in its monotony. Nothing, nothing, but to get the balls along the top cushion is the aim of the star artists.

Billiards is a game that has undergone, and in the certain nature of things is bound further to undergo, many legislative changes. In America it is the same, too, as on the Continent. Whenever any single stroke detracts from the all-round character of the play it has been put aside. We have seen the spot strokes and push strokes disappear, and in the pocketless game many restrictions have been enforced to kill the one-time endless run of cannons.

I may be ahead of the times, or I may not, but all the same I venture to prophesy that the game of the coming generation will be the losing-hazard one. As fashions vary in everything, so will the fashion of the "top-of-the-table" game die out, or be compulsorily wiped out. If we manage to get a young and gifted player, with level head enough to break away from the top-of-the-table fetish and go in whole-heartedly for the commonplace losing hazards, then will the older hands be asking themselves many and not-easily-answered questions. Hanging and hanging on to the lucrative red ball, he will set the billiard world ablaze by the magnitude of his breaks. Every tongue will go to chorus the same approval that went up when Roberts first exposed his hand. Please do not think that I am building castles in the air, or that the losing hazard is a monomania with me. I put it forward because I know its good qualities, and what it may produce. What I want is to see it taken up and fostered and nourished as the "top-of-the-table" game has been, and then you, too, will appreciate the why and wherefore of my support to it.

It may, and will, mean a slower game, but, in the place of the fleeting impression of a cannon or a winning hazard that the "top-of-the-table" game gives, you will have a defined stroke every time to watch. There will be few, or none, of those bugbears in the way of the balls "covering," which even the best performers cannot avoid when engaged in the close work by the top cushion. All will be assured easy travelling to the skilled player, and the panorama of his strokes will be more acceptable and understandable

to those who may watch them. If breaks of five, six and seven hundred are not at least as plentiful as now, point me out as an unworthy prophet. But there is no fear of that.

Now what I want to know is, who, of the present celebrities, has the courage to take up with and abide by the losing-hazard game?

CHAPTER VI

THE TOP-OF-THE-TABLE GAME

THE "losing-hazard break" is the stepping-stone to the more classical and refined "top-of-the-table break." This, as most billiard players may know, is the creation of John Roberts. It is an adaptation of the old spot stroke, in which close cannons maintain intermittent play with the disappearance of the red ball in the one or the other of the two top pockets. This "top-of-the-table" game is full of light and shade. For effect, nothing like it has ever been seen on the billiard-table. Ever and ever the delicate cannons serve to place the player for the all-important winning hazard. The red ball is the key ball and the pivot of the game all the time. It is the predominant partner in all the scoring transactions. The object-white is merely attendant upon it. Its function, except in the infrequent case of a succession (technically known as a "nursery") of close cannons, is to always put the cue-ball in strong position on the coloured ball. The three points earned for the latter's insertion into a corner pocket, as against the two points a cannon brings in its train, goes to show the wisdom of the policy of playing upon the red ball. A 50 per cent. gain — as this winning hazard thus

shows over the cannon—must be a profound factor in a lengthy game. Therefore, I consider THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS PROFICIENCY AT THE TOP-OF-THE-TABLE GAME IS TO BE A GOOD WINNING-HAZARD STRIKER—a player who is able to insert the red ball in the corner pocket with some degree of certainty.

The winning hazards that occur in the top-of-the-table passages are as varied and as difficult of execution as many a similar one at double the range. They require such tender treatment that the player must have some sort of mathematical accuracy in his delivery—to say nothing of his ball and the table—before I should advise him to definitely take up with this elusive form of scoring. And now and again the red will shape itself most awkwardly. You may have played the stroke a little too hard, or a little too slowly. Anyhow, whichever the fault, the solid fact stares you in the face that your contemplated winning hazard placed for you by the general utility cannon is a nasty one. The red ball may be sheltered under the top cushion or under one of the side cushions, only a few inches away from the corner pocket it is true. Still, to get it into the hole requires a very nice stroke. You don't particularly fancy it, and in face of its unpleasant look you have strong doubts as to your ability to bring it off. This and similar strokes go far to mark the difference between a capable top-of-the-table exponent and one who falls short of it. In my opinion, based on observation of the play of the leading professionals, there are not more than four of them, or five at the most, who can meet effectively, day in and day out, every phase of the winning hazard that must inevitably arise, sooner or

later, in these top-of-the-table constructions. Nothing in billiards appears so easy as their consistently successful treatment by such players as Roberts, Stevenson, Dawson, Diggle, and Mitchell. No strokes, however, demand more precision, and the player's confidence in himself to make them. The ease with which the crack players so surely operate on the red ball does not, in itself, bespeak the years of practice it took them to acquire. Studious application, all the same, is, and has been, the secret of their proficiency.

It is as well to remember that failure at the winning hazard during top-of-the-table play is equal to making your opponent a present of a good opening. Almost every time the red ball does not go into, it overhangs, the pocket. This comes about as a result of the great proportion of delicate strokes upon it. I have seen this sort of thing happen times out of number. Two players of pretty much the same strength will be playing. One of them, who has not improbably paid a recent visit to a big professional match, is overflowing with a desire to play as he has seen the celebrities engaged therein do. He wants to make the little cannons, and keep placing the red ball over the corner pockets to put it down with his following stroke. Sometimes he leaves it nicely, and brings off the winning hazard. When he does so it is no assured thing that he leaves himself an easy cannon to go on with. So he either plays a spot stroke, or smashes up his top-of-the-table position at one fell swoop by the insecure after-position agency of a scattering "screw" shot. In the first instance, he will generally fail to insert the red, leaving it to be summarily dealt with by his opponent, who is of the opportunist

order of player—the one, you know, who lets the balls do just as they like, and who gets most of the strokes that are “on,” and a few that are not. In the second instance, that of the screwed cannon, it is reasonable odds against the balls coming together again, or leaving anything of a desirable nature to go at. The usual ending to these sort of games is that the rough-and-ready player, who tries to tack no embroidery on to his game, usually cuts up the aspiring top-of-the-tabler in quite astonishing style. “You keep leaving the red over the hole!” he says, and bing! bang! flop! down it goes. The unsuccessful player squirms at this unceasing procedure, and presently he says to himself: “This top-of-the-table is a very poor game, after all!” and he, too, begins to shake his wielding arm to a merry and forceful tune at the rough-and-ready losing hazards, the long cannons, and the straightaway, slap-dash winning hazards. Then his normal scoring form returns to him.

This is not a fancy picture that I have drawn from my own imagination. I have seen hundreds of the kind. My idea of dragging it into this chapter was to point a moral in the connection with the top-of-the-table game—do not attempt it unless you have proved to yourself that you score more heavily by its assistance than by the plainer and surer losing-hazard game which I have recommended to all amateur players.

After the winning hazards the cannon—the dainty little cannons that reopen connection with the red ball—must be spoken of. They vie in importance with the chief scoring object—the putting down of the red ball. They open or close the door, just as the player treats his cannon, to the essential winning hazard. Touchy as

most of them are they, nevertheless, bring every conceivable stroke into play. The thin shot, the half-ball, the quarter-ball, the run-through, the "stun," "top," and "side," and every variety of "screw." To apply each and all of these in the delicate style that top-of-the-table play necessitates is a tax upon the ability of even the most skilful professional. He has to drop precisely on a given part of the second object-ball, at a given rate of speed. The top cushion must be touched with just that amount of "side" which will push the ball along an inch or two further, or an inch or two less—as the use of running or reverse "side" will respectively cause—than a plain ball would. The screwed and stunned balls must take the two object-balls to a hair's point of the intended aim on each, and so very, very gently. Most people who see this most delightful form of billiards in trained hands do not appreciate its beauties or intricacies. "Deep as unfathomable waters," a friend of mine has termed it all—a true and pithy summing-up. It is deep, and as rich, too, in its multifold and ever-changing situations, as it is deep. It is chess over again, but in a more attractive guise. The flitting combinations always ask the cultured player to look at least *three moves ahead*. You put down the red with intent to get in line behind as it goes up on the billiard spot for a second winning hazard, foreseeing a cannon with your third stroke, by which medium you hope to get on to the red again—you have looked three moves or three strokes ahead. But in the playing of your first winning hazard you have gone a bit further down the table—ever beware of this fault in top-of-the-table play—and you are not in a nice guiding line behind the red. Your set combination is

spoilt, and instead of the second winning hazard you play a cannon, dropping the red ball close to the further corner pocket, to put it in there at your next shot, with a winning hazard or cannon to follow—you are still looking your three strokes ahead. Now and again the three strokes may of necessity be all cannons, and in exceptional cases, such as the driving away of the object-white ball towards the baulk end of the table, all winning hazards, the first from the open field of play, and the second and third from off the billiard spot, to gain its transference to the middle spot. But in the normal way the top-of-the-table combinations are composed of the alternate cannon and winning hazards.

I have prefaced the system of the best-known, but most difficult, means of scoring points a bit lengthily. My idea is, however, to drive home the pith of the top-of-the-table operations and its needs. Commencing with an outline, such as I have tried to give, of its chief points cannot but be of service in following out the details of the play in the various ramifications—or as near to them as the patience of my readers will allow.

When the balls are driven to the neighbourhood of the billiard spot, the most perfect position they can take is like this :

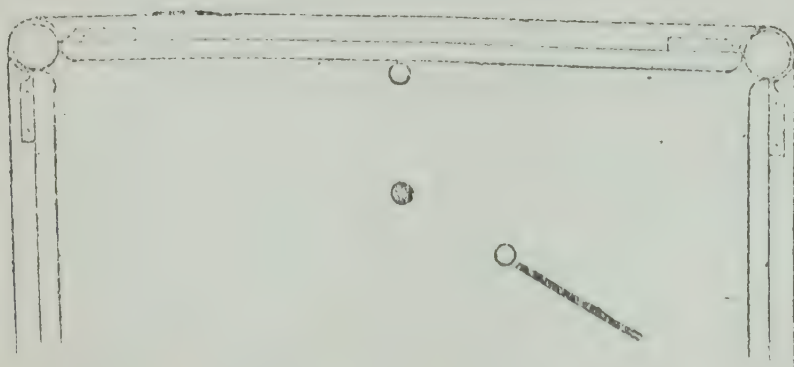


FIG. 156.—The ideal top-of-the-table position.

or this :



FIG. 157.—The second best top-of-the-table position.

There are many and many others almost equally as good, but for easy working of the balls at the head of the table there are none better than these examples. It will be observed that in each instance the red ball is on its natural plot of green. The object-white stands by, awaiting developments and co-operation with its stronger partner. In the one position it is lying on the top cushion behind the red, with the cue-ball serenely dominating the situation. Plainly the stroke here is to dribble the coloured ball gently over the further top pocket, and drop flush and full on to the object-white, with the idea of keeping it pinned to its place. This process may be indefinitely repeated by means of a skilful disposition of the cue-ball when inserting the red ball at the next shot. Get it to form an easy angle from red to cushioned white by sending it slightly below the billiard spot—a parallel position, as nearly as possible, to your first one. Again play the cannon, to drop plumb on the retained object-white, sending the red over to the other top pocket, and so on *ad lib.* This top-of-the-table position is the surest and safest of any. It is simplicity itself in all but the practice of it. The theoretical part of it appeals strongly to players, by being so devoid of complications. I do not remember to have seen this identical dual cannon

and maintenance of red winning-hazard sequence prolonged for more than a dozen of each kind of stroke—even by the best professionals. Something or the other, mainly in the way of a miscalculation of “strength” on the cue-ball, causes the player to get out of the angle for the needed full-ball stroke on the object-white. This dropping full on to the latter is technically known to the billiard profession as the “postman’s knock.” Try the stroke and notice the rat! as the cue-ball makes contact, and then the tat! as the object-white rebounds back on to the cue-ball, to stop dead, as if pinched, between these two forces.

The second top-of-the-table position shown demands more skilful handling than the one I have just been discussing. Now, there is no defined stroke, such as the “postman’s knock,” to hold the object-white by the billiard spot. To retain its invaluable services as the connecting medium for position on the red will call for greater skill and intelligence from the player. The more lightly the cannon that plants the coloured ball for the ensuing winning hazard is played, the longer will be the object-white’s career by the billiard spot. But its presence on the lower side of that landmark renders the play more varied, and more reliant upon circumstances, than when it is in between the spotted red ball and the top cushion. Out in the open field of play the object-white becomes a more elusive factor than ever. Even with the aid of the cushion it is by no means amenable to the player’s will and intention. The mistakes come as regularly, if not with such startling, to say nothing of annoying, frequency, as when it is practically a free ball.

So much for the best of the ball arrangements that

may occur in the widely known, but mainly imperfectly understood, top-of-the-table play. These look particularly flattering to the scoring prospects of the player that may obtain them. But it strikes me that many of my readers will be saying to themselves, "It's all very well to show the top-of-the-table position, but how does one manage to get it?" This I take to be a common-sense question, and one that is likely to be submitted to me. Therefore, I make it my excuse—a sound one I hope this will be taken to be—for presenting various strokes of complicated (in more or less degree) positions leading up, and other incidentals to the top-of-the-table play. There is a key to every lock and a lock to every well-preserved door. Equally the same remarks apply to entering upon the threshold of a top-of-the-table break. There are defined passages to the relegation of the balls to the head of the table. One stroke may do it, two strokes may be required, and, as often as not, perhaps, the favourite position may require the employment of three strokes. And of these things I will give the most frequently recurring and simple examples. Apart from actually having the balls where you need them for top-of-the-table play, there is no shorter or more ready *route* to their being guided to the vicinity of the billiard spot, than when they are placed in the shape of Fig. 158.

The player is "in hand," and, curiously enough, as it may seem, he is given the option of either a "losing-hazard break" or a "top-of-the-table" one. Both object-balls lie within easy losing-hazard angle and range of the middle pockets. The top-of-the-table game being imperative, seeing that it is now under discussion, the

argument is, How get the three balls by the billiard-spot? To drop gently in off the object-white, cutting

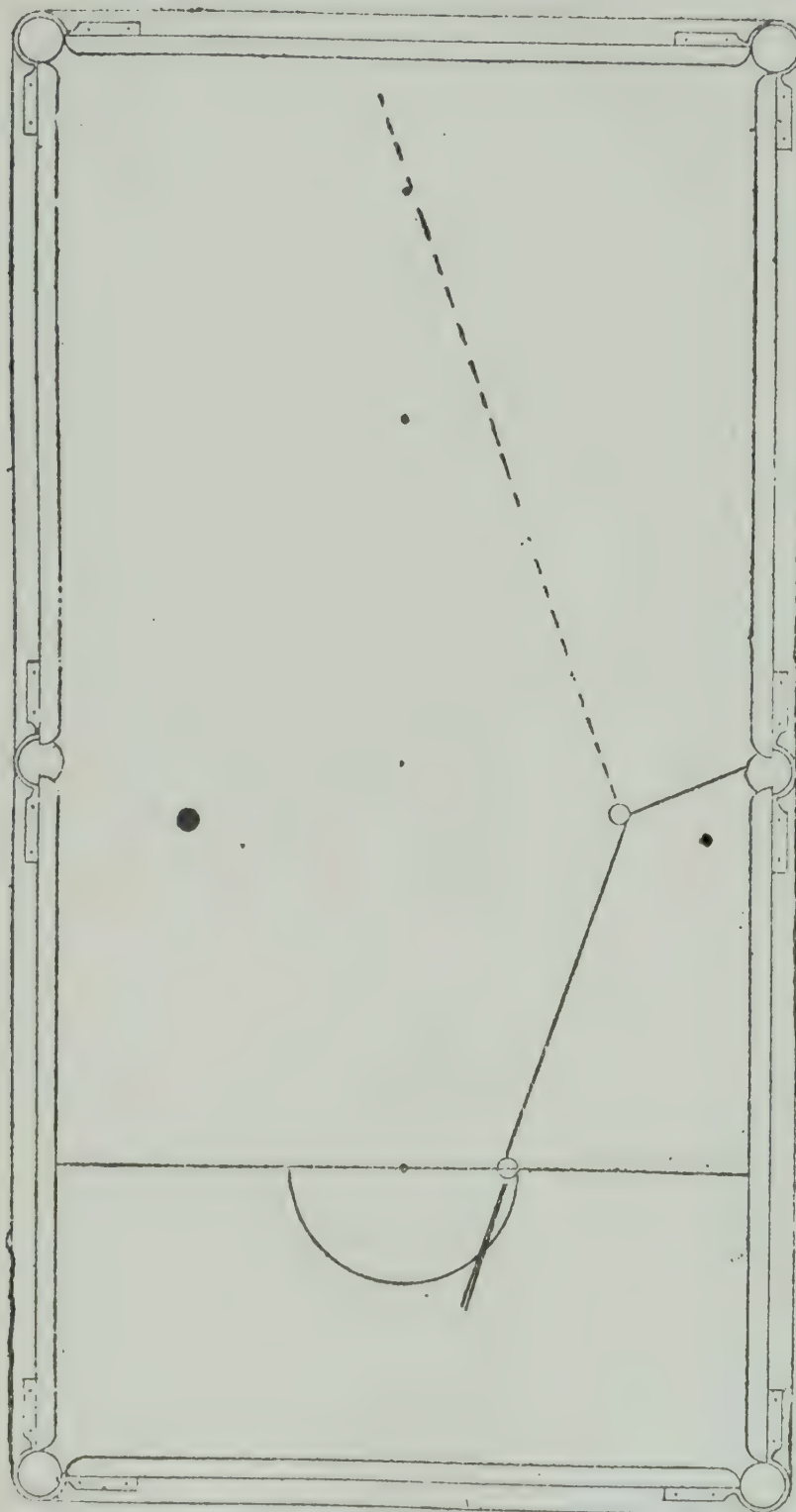


FIG. 158.—Placing the object-white by the billiard spot for top-of-the-table play. The red ball is pocketed at the next stroke.

it over to the middle of the top cushion, is plainly the

preliminary stroke, to be followed by the putting in of the red and the running up the table to the new scene of operations by the cue-ball. The losing hazard must be made with a thinnish cutting stroke and some running "side." You have to send the object-white to the centre of the top cushion, and it must be struck thinly by the cue-ball. A slightly under medium-pace stroke will generally suffice to do what is required. When you have your opponent's ball securely under the cushion, you can play at the red with ten times more confidence than if it stood in a commanding position to take advantage of your failing to make the winning hazard. Playing the latter, you place your ball by the middle spot of the D, and, dropping about half-ball on to the red, it goes in the near pocket, the cue-ball runs to a point some eighteen inches or so—anywhere within a radius of a foot gives position in varying degree—of the top cushion on the left side of the table, and the construction of the top-of-the-table has its foundation.

Fig. 159 shows another optional position. It is "losing hazard" or "top-of-the-table," just as the player may elect. To get in touch with the latter scoring system, it requires, as usual, a preliminary driving of the white by the billiard spot, and an insertion of the red at the next shot. To manœuvre the white, according to your plan, you must play a cushion losing hazard. It is not difficult, but it is a stroke that the ordinary player will not play for readily so long as he sees a pretty sure winning hazard, as the position of the red ball gives him, staring him in the face. But in billiards, methodical play—the playing up to set combinations—is the only royal road to break-making. Now and again

the slap-dash, unthinking player will make a decent "break," but he will not make it often.

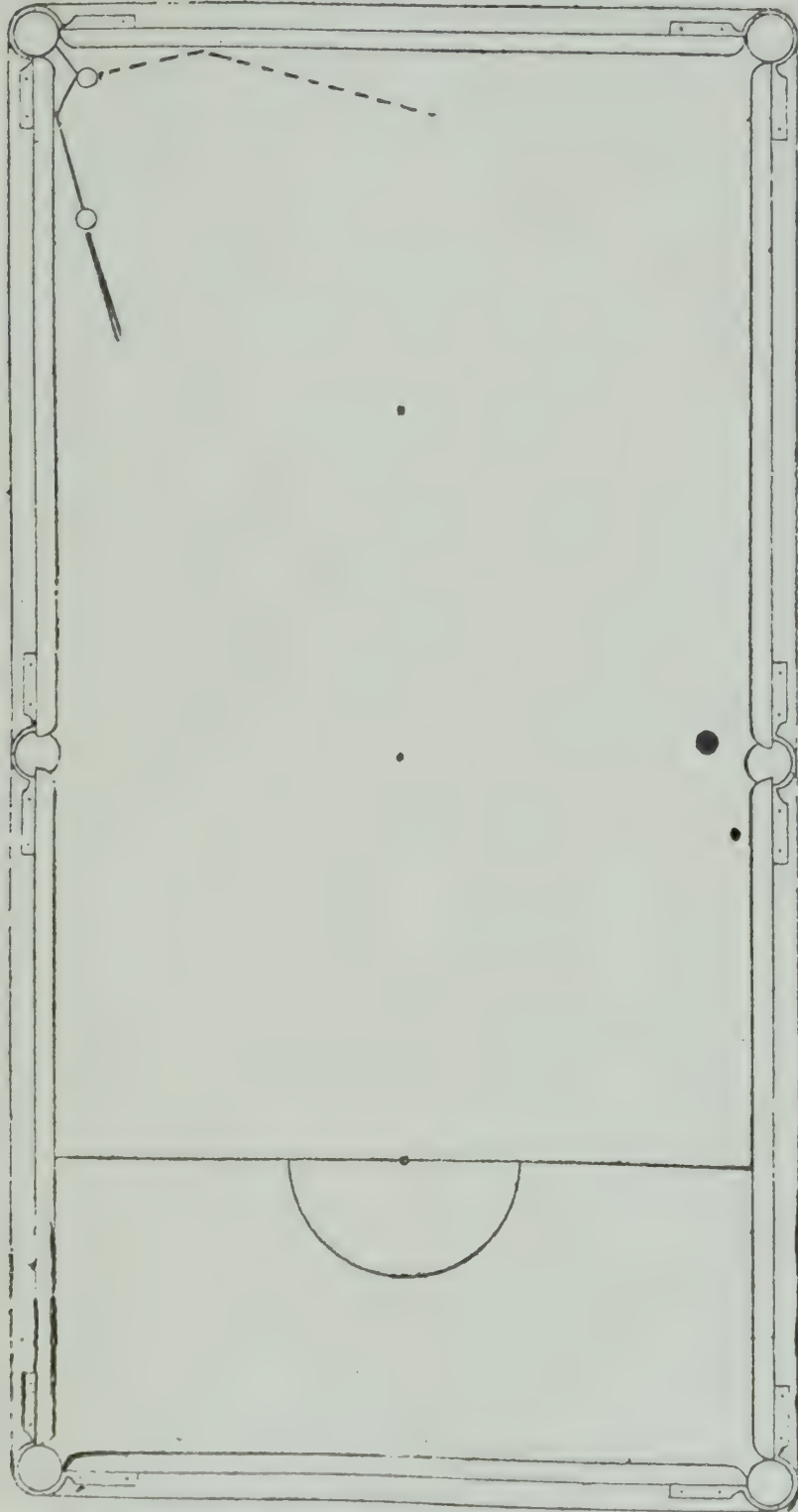


FIG. 159.—Cushion losing hazard placing the white ball by the billiard spot for top-of-the-table play.

Better for even the poorest player to stick to the text

of the game than go blindly at anything and everything that takes his fancy. Suppose, in the case of the "leave" under notice, the red was put down with the first stroke—what could one hope to have "left on?" The playing of the cushion loser is obviously trying to open up a "break." One should make this shot five times out of six. It steers the object-white by the billiard spot, and the cue-ball coming up "in hand" commands the red, which, however, is hardly so nicely placed for the winning hazard as it might be. To make it, a nice "cut" is needed. But I counsel the playing of the winning hazard all the same. It is odds on getting it, so go for it. The top-of-the-table game must be played up to the hilt, and, as I have pointed out, the player's chief requisite is proficiency at the winning hazard. Don't try to accomplish impossibilities, but, nevertheless, never shirk the real basis of the system—the winning hazard—when it is on. In the example given the losing hazard off the red ball can barely be missed, whereas the winning hazard demands an accurate thin shot. There you have a bright and shining comparison between the two break methods. The losing-hazard game is easy, and the top-of-the-table game—the winning-hazard and tricky cannon game—is hard. That is why I have advised the losing-hazard game to all amateur players.

Continuing the subject of the paving of the way towards a top-of-the-table gathering of the balls, the wonderful likeness existing in these preliminary moves to those of "the losing-hazard break" must strike one very forcibly. The position that will get a player in touch with the one will infallibly do so with the other.

That is why I so strongly recommend the adoption of one of these scoring systems—the “losing hazard” or “top-of-the-table.” Definitely make up your mind to play up to which of the two you think will suit you best. Do not “mix” the two things any more than the exigencies of the recovery of position or the leading up to the latter may demand. If you are in a “top-of-the-table” frame of mind, your first step towards getting there is to drive the object-white close to the billiard spot, and then to insert the red ball, seeing at the same time that the cue-ball is sent to the neighbourhood of the top cushion. On the other, if your fancy prompts you to pursue losing-hazard practice, never rest satisfied until you have BOTH object-balls each giving you an opening to one or more pockets. Cling tenaciously to the hazards from the red ball, only using the object-white as a means to recover position on it when this has been lost.

Take Fig. 160 as an oft-recurring placing of the balls. It provides the entrance to either scoring system in very clear fashion. The “top-of-the-table” player goes gently off the object-white into the right top pocket, steering the latter near the billiard spot by dropping rather freely on it, and using left “side” to work on the further angle of the opening. Next, playing from the baulk half circle, the coloured ball is sent into the right middle pocket, the cue-ball following up the table to make its way near to the object-balls. Perfect “top-of-the-table” position ensues. To open up connection with the “losing-hazard break,” however, the opening stroke from the object-white would have been of a different kind. A gentle touch, sending the cue-ball

slowly in, and making the object-white come almost straight back from the cushion just far enough—a foot

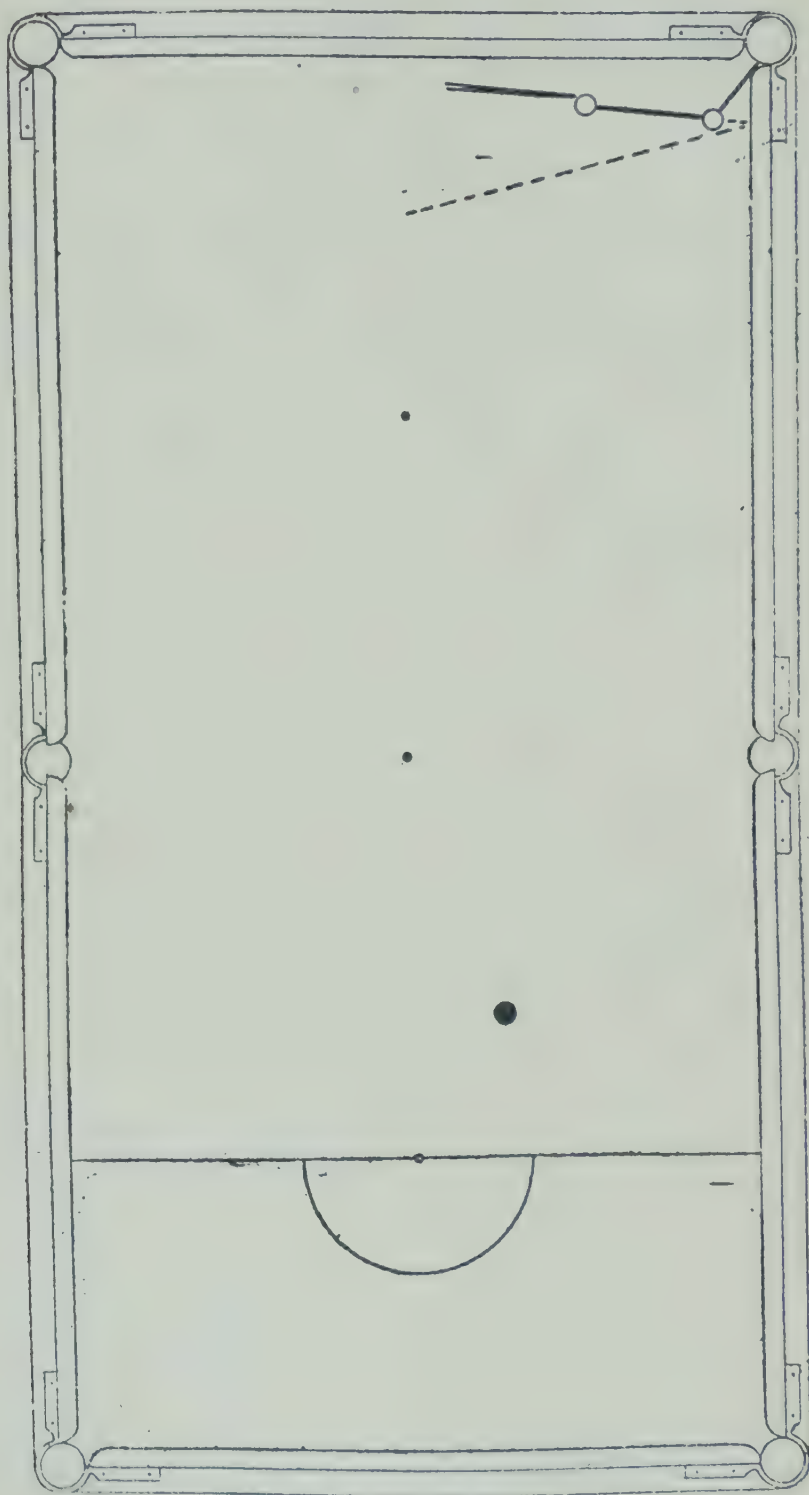


FIG. 160.—Guiding the white by the billiard spot for top-of-the-table play.

or so—away from it to present an easy second losing

hazard, if required, into the same pocket. You have thus your two object-balls in position for losing-hazard operations.

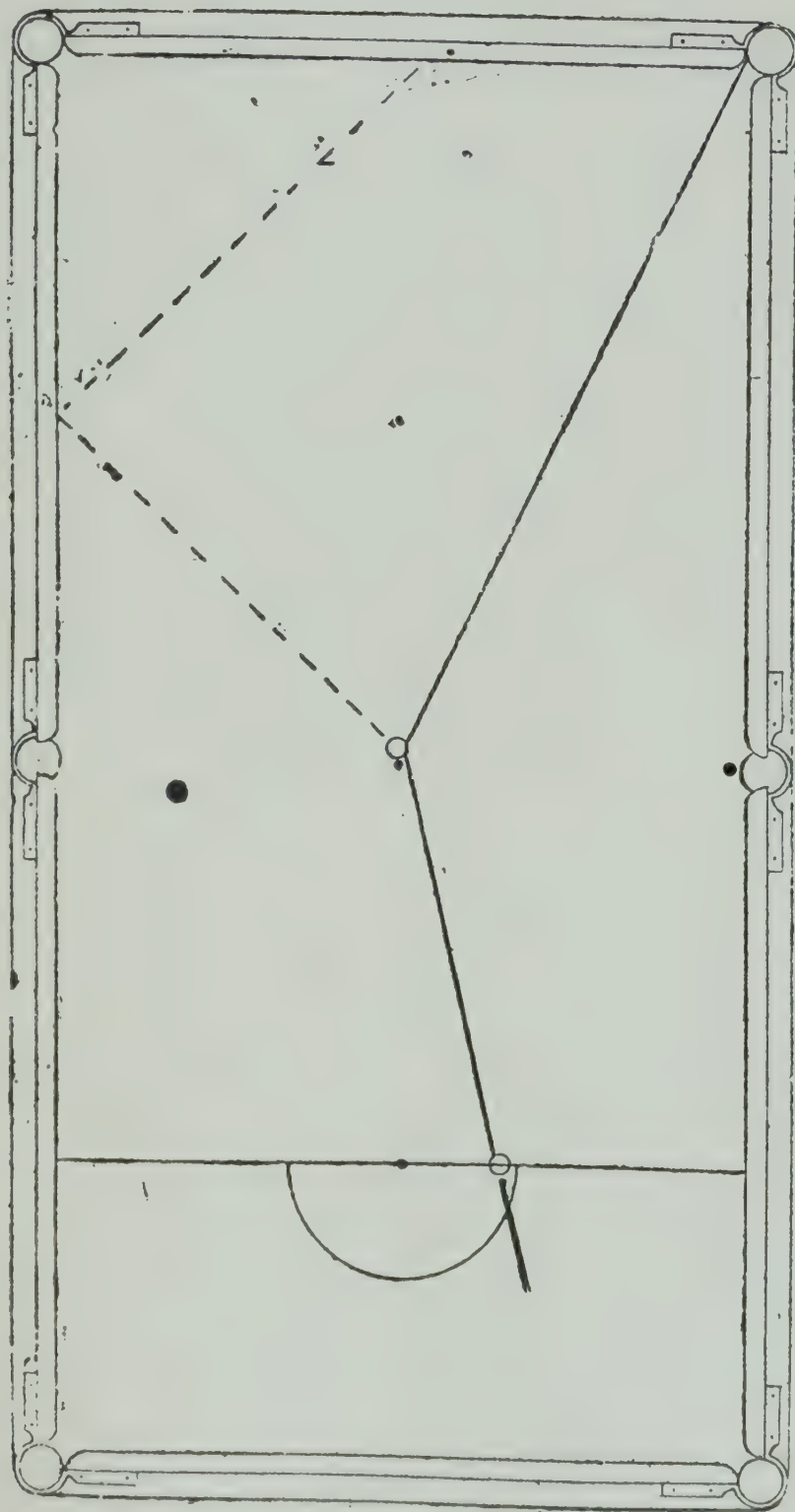


FIG. 161.—Long losing hazard guiding the object-white to the vicinity of the billiard spot.

On Fig. 161 there will be found a placing of the balls that may well be regarded as a pretty strong one from a losing-hazard point of view—the red affording an easy “in off” to the left middle pocket, and the object-white in the middle of the table. In either system of break-making the long losing hazard off the white is the correct game to play. For the losing-hazard method the centre of the table must be cleared, to give an open passage for the working of the red ball up and down the board. In moving the object-white the idea in this case would be to transport it to somewhere around the right middle pocket.

The “top-of-the-table” game also demands playing upon the object-white. Assuredly the position of the red ball would make most hesitate before neglecting it at the first stroke. But, as I have said, either you play the “top-of-the-table” or you play the “losing-hazard” game. If you elect to keep to the more delicate and intricate top-of-the-table arrangements, your game is undoubtedly to play the “long loser” off the white at slow pace, so as to steer it down to the middle of the top cushion, or, at any rate, somewhere by the billiard spot. Then, with your second stroke, you “cut in” the red ball, send your own ball to the head of the table, and there commence upon the intermittent cannon and winning-hazard form of scoring.

A somewhat complicated position is illustrated on Fig. 162. Here the winning hazard is an extremely awkward one, though the attempting of it is almost justified by the presence of the object-white ball near to the billiard spot, looking so lonely with its partner away from home. To accomplish the winning hazard is to

put yourself in touch with an ideal "top-of-the-table"

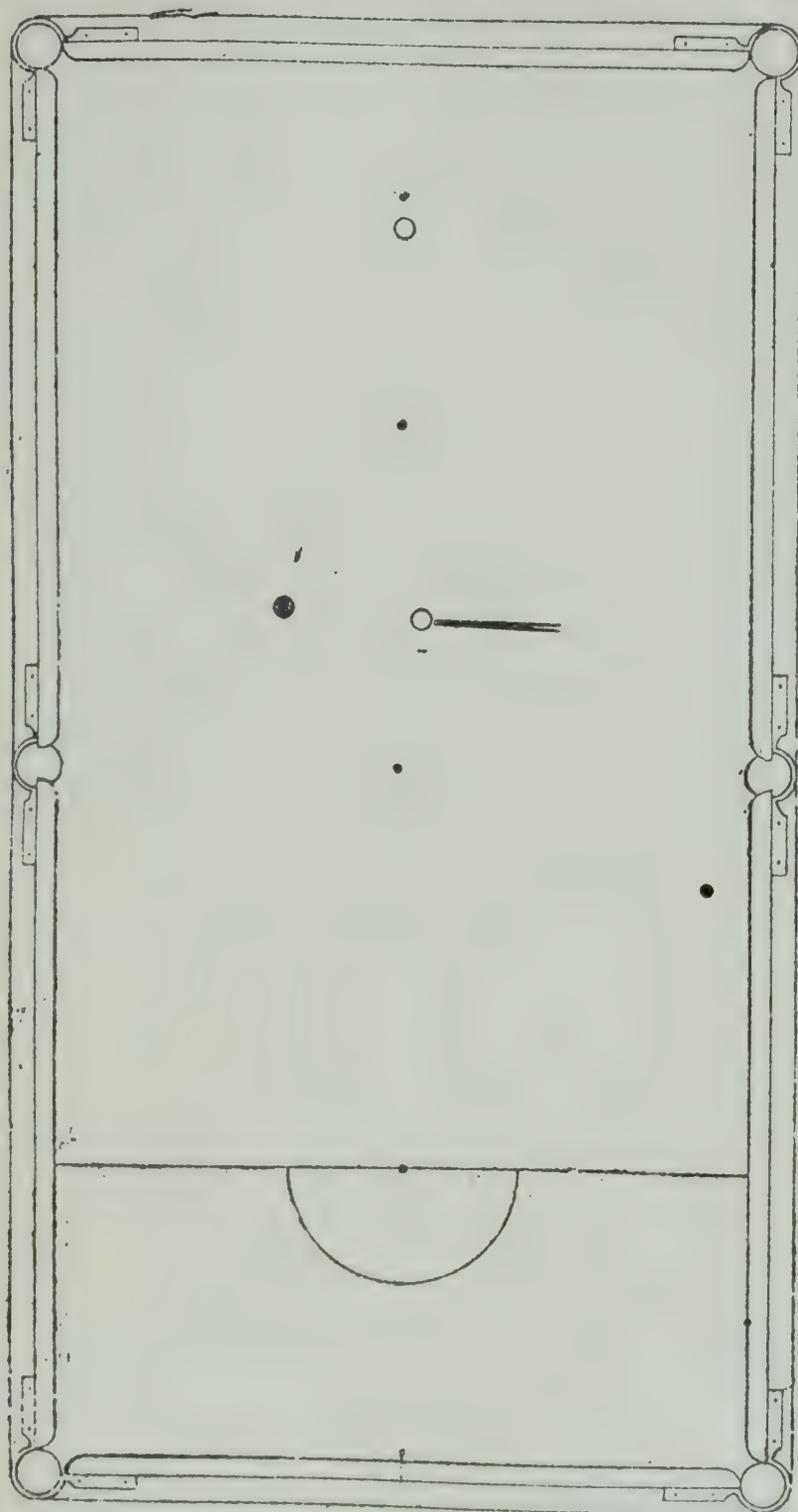


FIG. 162.—A complicated disposition of the balls. Top-of-the-table or losing hazard.

position straight away. But you take a big risk of throwing away your command of the table. Safer and

sounder play is to make the run-through "loser" off the red ball to shape the object-balls up for the "drop" cannon. Thus you may, and should, cause the three balls to congregate on the top cushion in two strokes, each simple and sound, in the place of one which bears the element of a strong uncertainty.

Of all the strokes that do not show the same direct road to top-of-the-table play as the definite examples of driving the object-white ball by the billiard spot, and the putting down of the red ball at the second shot, which I have lately shown, there is no more valuable aid towards obtaining the desired position than the "drop cannon." This, as the many illustrations I gave of it during the course of my "losing-hazard" break will tell, is the long cannon from the D that, properly played, causes all three balls to drop on to the top cushion. Its first serious usage came in the days of the "spot stroke" practice, and it was one of the chief mediums employed to put the player in touch with the favourite, but monotonous, hazard striking. The spectators of these old-time billiard exhibitions were even more anxious to sit at the head of the table than they are nowadays. All the play of consequence was conducted there. The on-coming of the three balls during the application of the "drop cannon" gave those seated at the spot end of the table the impression that the cue-ball and first object-ball were literally dropping down on to the top cushion, on making their respective ways to the second object-ball. With the eye thrown along the stretch of green a sort of minor optical illusion comes to a seated spectator. His eyes are little more than over the level of the cushion woodwork. A constant

survey of the action of the balls on their "natural tinted" bed gives the illusory effect that the baulk end of the board is higher than the spot end. This aspect is induced by the fact that the top cushion hides some part of the upper end, whereas the whole of its other surface stands out plainly before you. And with the cue and first object-ball apparently coming at you down an inclined plane it should not be difficult to trace the origin of the term "drop cannon."

It may be said of the "drop cannon" that it bears the same analogy in position play at billiards as trumps do in card play. The old maxim of "When in doubt play trumps," might well be transformed into, "When in doubt, leave yourself the 'drop cannon,'" as it would be equally sound and justifiable on all counts. If you are playing at the top of the table, and you do not see your way to making either a cannon or a red winning hazard—essentials for prolonging your scoring round and about the billiard spot—look for a losing hazard to open the object-balls out for the invaluable "drop cannon." If, on the other hand, you are indulging in the "losing-hazard game," and not having both object-balls in position for losing hazards—the first principle of the system—you are undecided as to what course to pursue, do not hesitate, but frame up the "drop cannon." You will not make many mistakes if you abide by this advice.

Some of my readers will already be murmuring, I dare say, "What is a 'drop cannon'?" They know the stroke, of course, but the technical title is unfamiliar to them. So, for the instruction of those to whom the name is strange, and also those who have not had the

pleasure of noting the effect of the stroke in highly skilled hands, I must outline the playing of it. Well, any one of the diagrams illustrating these cannons should plainly show that any formation of the balls presenting the second object-ball close to the top cushion, the other one so arranged that the player whose ball is "in hand" can make an angle cannon from it, asks for an application of the "drop cannon." The more the three balls approach equi-distant locations one from the other, the easier is it to "leave" them close together by the top cushion. For the one thing, you obtain a more defined angle for the cannon; and for another, the running of the cue and first object-ball is easier to control. Nothing is more awkward in cannon play than a short leg and a long leg (as the first object-ball close up to the player and the second one a considerable distance away are respectively styled), or a long leg and a short leg. The first makes the cannon difficult, and also the taking of the first object-ball to the neighbourhood of the other two on the completion of the cannon—the chief aim in all cannon play. The second, if not increasing the difficulty of the actual score, undoubtedly gives trouble in the important matter of retaining position. Thus it is best to keep the object-balls well apart when leaving the "drop cannon," and the nearer you can get the first object-ball to the halfway point between top cushion and baulk line the better for the playing of your cannon, and the needful after-position.

Another valuable rule referring to "drop cannons" is (as I laid down in their connection in the losing-hazard break), "*when the object-balls are together, make a losing hazard open them out for the 'drop cannon.'*" But

when the cue-ball lies close to an object-ball, and the remain-

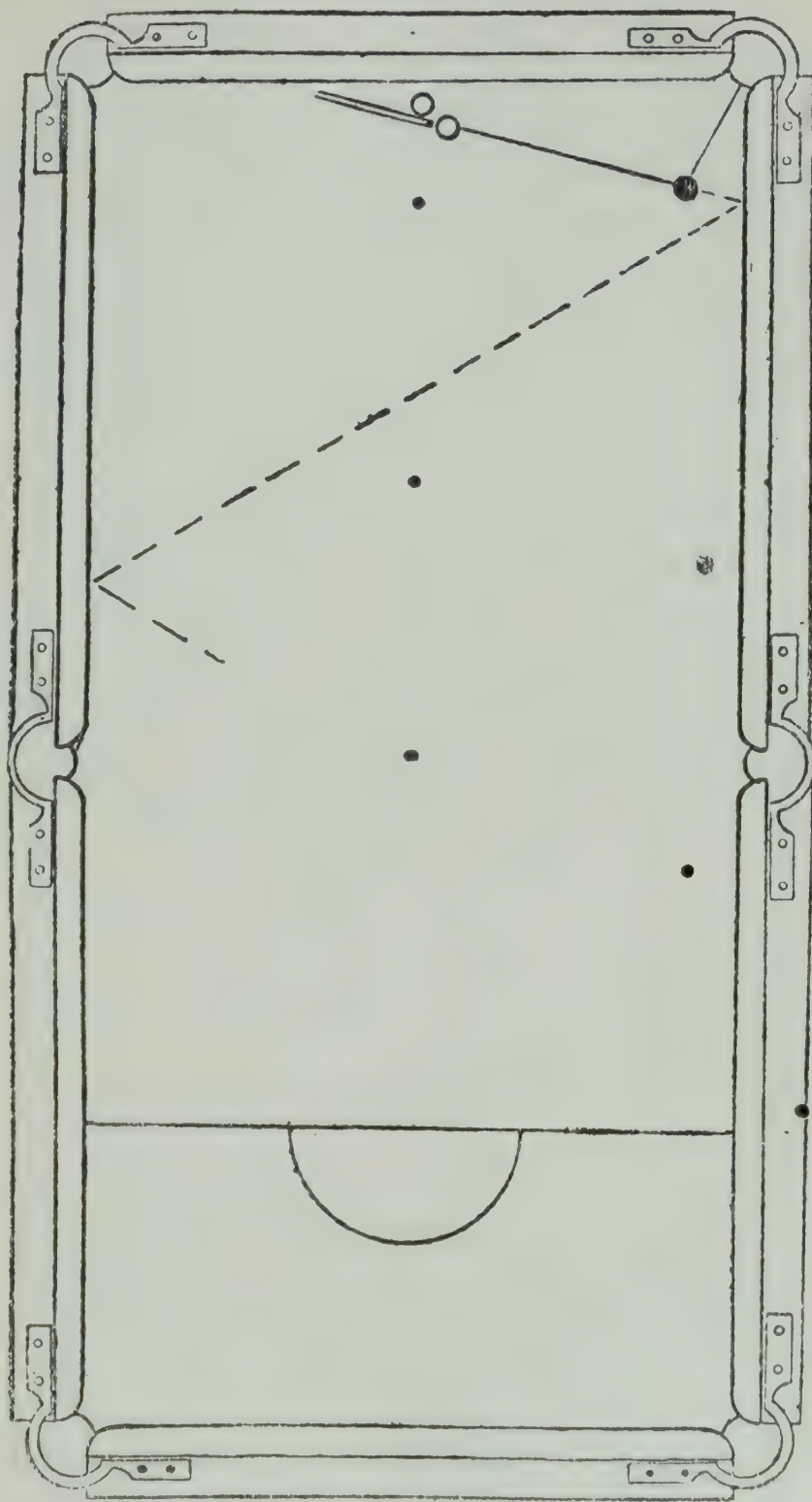


FIG. 163.—A losing hazard doubling the red across the table to leave a “drop cannon” as a preliminary to top-of-the-table play.

ing ball is situated anywhere between the centre of the

upper half of the table (the pyramid spot line, in point of fact) and the middle pockets, do not move the ball you play upon more than is absolutely necessary." I give illustrations of both points on the different diagrams, the first of which (Fig. 163) shows the three balls lying close together, presumably after a spell of top-of-the-table play which has ended with the red ball getting out of position. So the player has to turn to the losing hazard from it, with the idea of leaving himself the "drop cannon" for a return visit to the vicinity of the billiard spot. The red ball is doubled down and across the table to stop in almost perfect equi-distance with baulk line and object-white, and affording an easy angle cannon—a "drop cannon"—from the D. You will see that the first part of the rule is adhered to in the opening out of the object-balls for the "drop cannon" when they were lying near to each other. Fig. 164 displays the second part of the rule. On it the object-balls are placed widely apart, and, sticking to the text of "not moving the ball you play upon more than is necessary" in these circumstances, the losing hazard is gently played off the object-white. The latter ball runs out by the spot, keeping the original intervening distance between it and the red almost intact. Result—another equi-distant angle cannon from the D. Further examples of both sections of the rule are respectively supplied on Figs. 165 and 166. The first of these illustrates another case where the object-balls lie close together, and how by a well-judged, if easily accomplished, losing hazard, the first object-ball is driven away to shape up the needed cannon arrangement. The "loser" in the middle pocket permits of the object-white being sent to a central point by the top

cushion opening up a plain angle cannon. No. 165 pro-

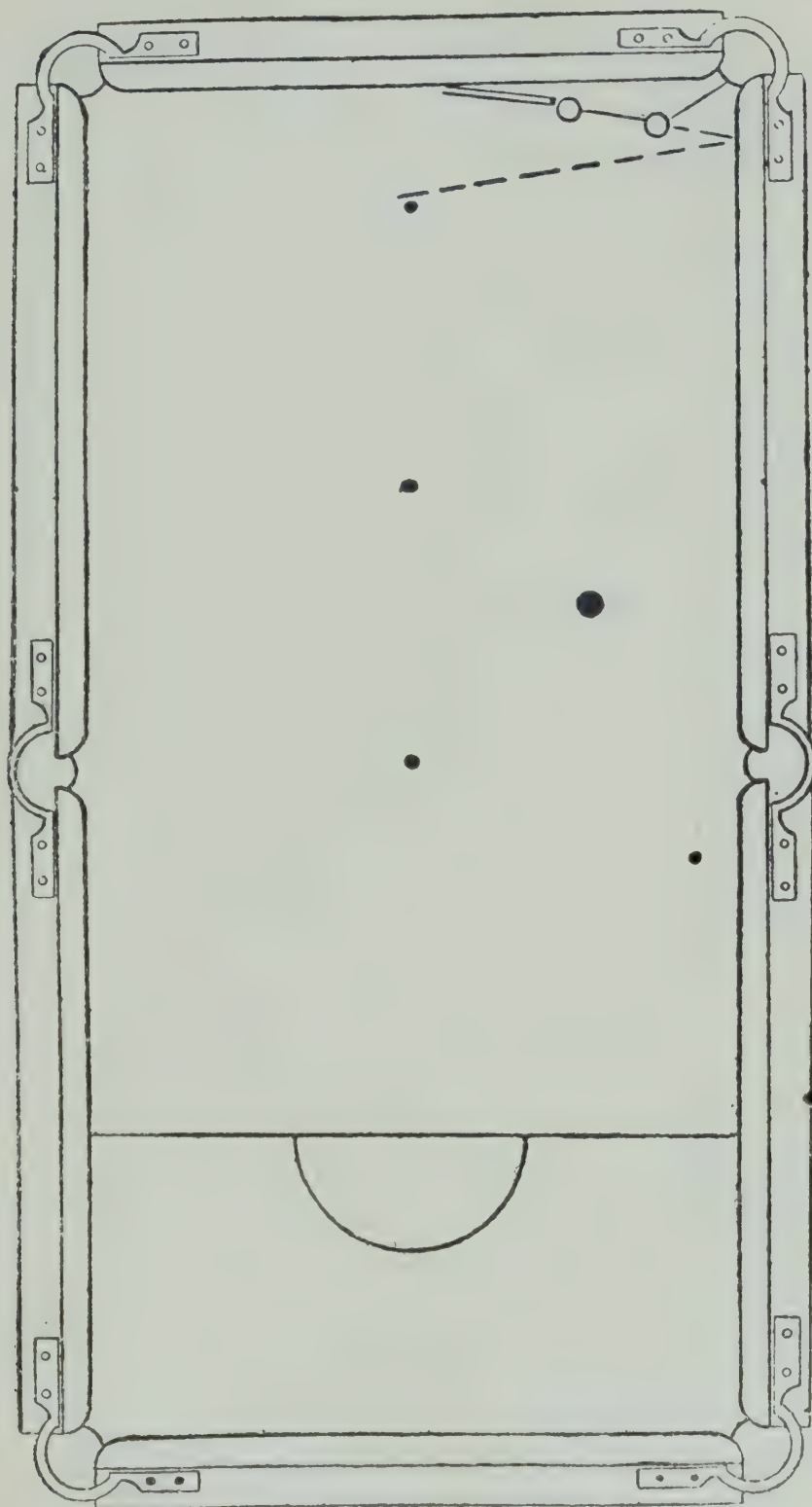


FIG. 164.—A run-through losing hazard shaping up the object-balls for a
"drop cannon."

vides the other side of the argument, whereby the played

object-ball is retained as nearly as possible in its place as the second object-ball is down by the top cushion.

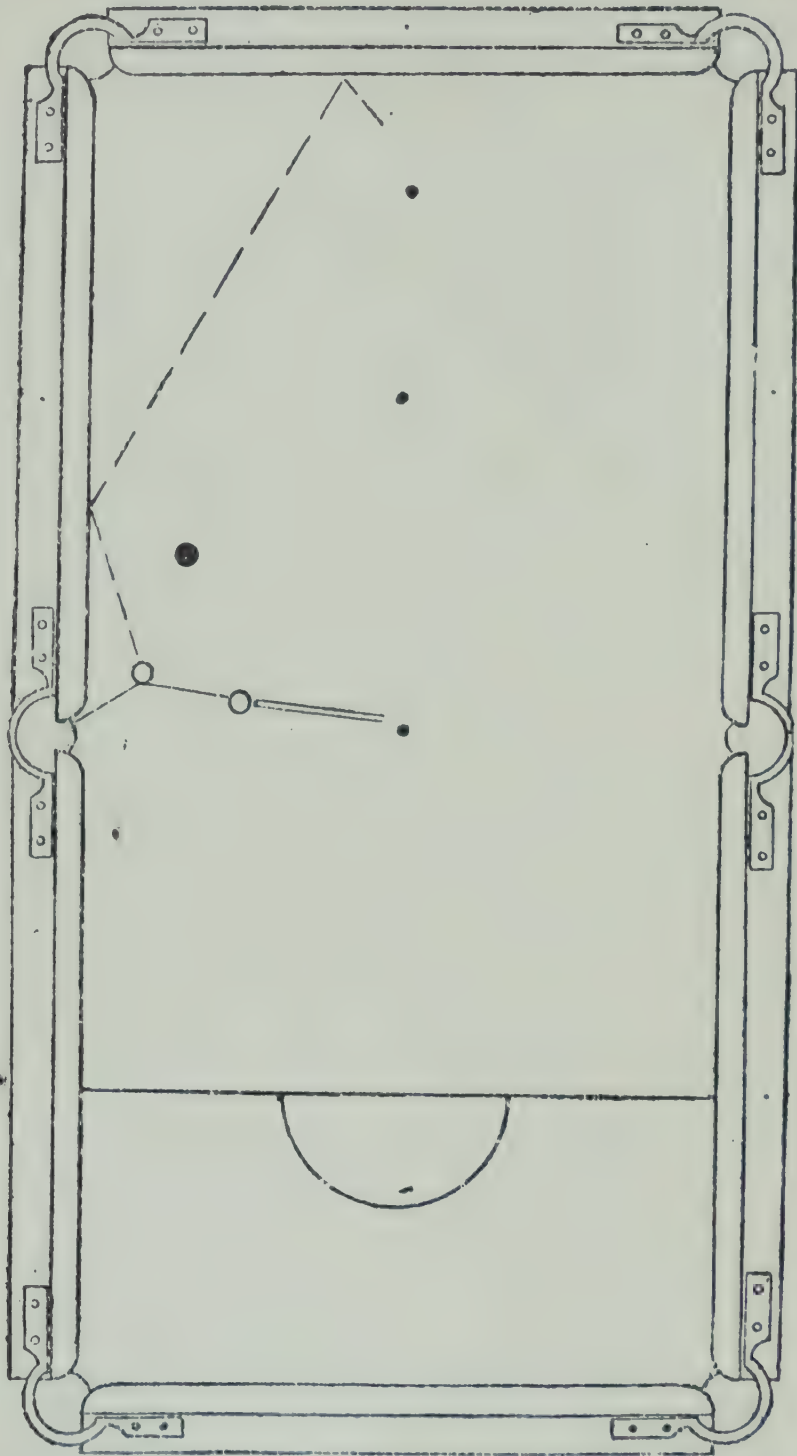


FIG. 165.—Cutting the object-white on to the top cushion to form a "drop cannon" leave.

A gentle "loser" off the white frames the object-balls for the "drop cannon."

It will be seen that the door to the formation of these "drop-cannon" positions is the handy losing hazard.

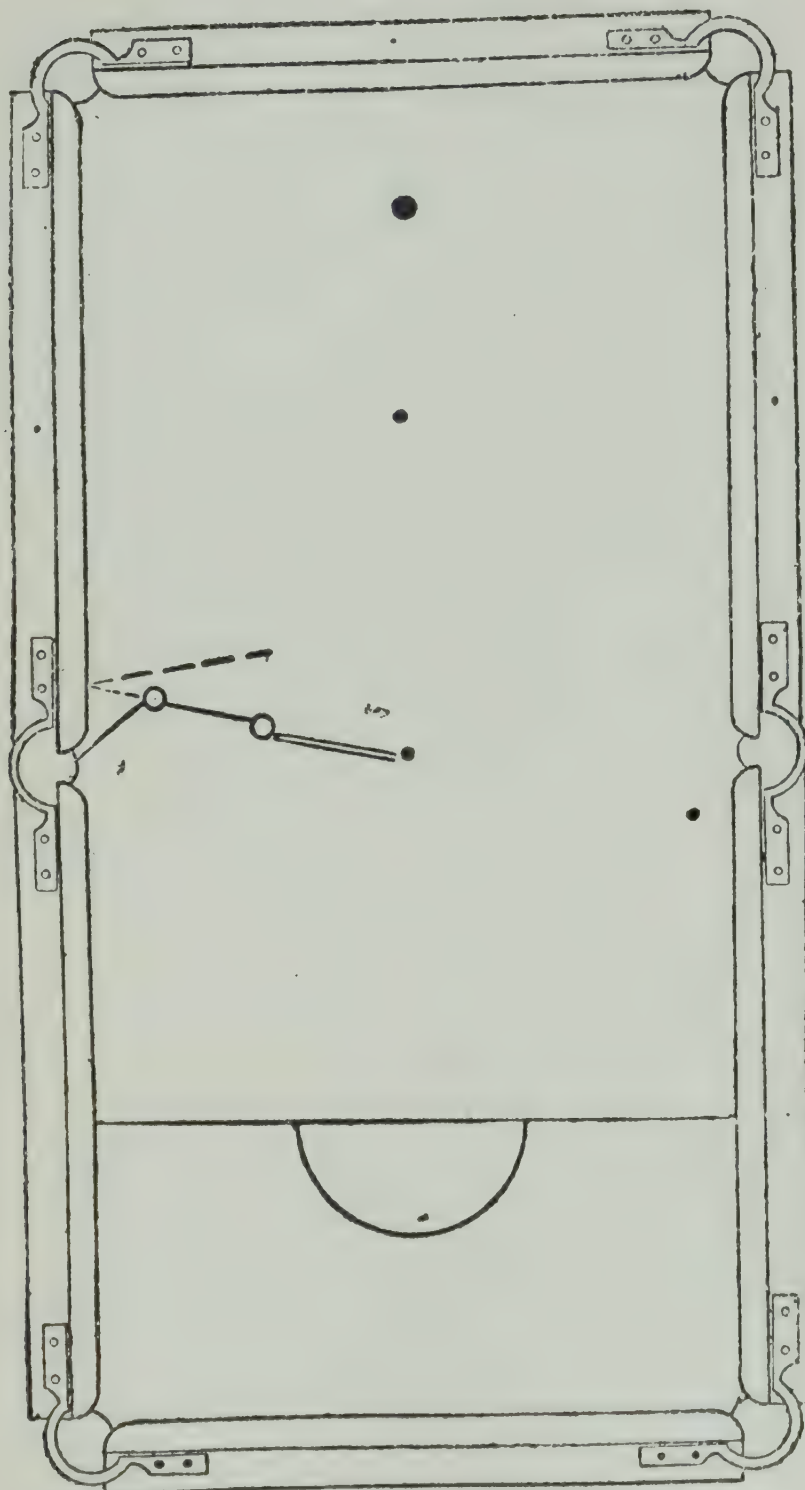


FIG. 166.—Another "drop-cannon" formation.

That the "drop cannon" has its frequent variations

I have shown. Often enough it is the case that one is unable to "bring the balls together" after making the cannon. A little familiarity with the stroke will soon tell you whether the first object-ball may be expected to join its partner. It may lie too much to the side of, or too far up, the table. Then the one-ball control—that is, the directing of a selected object-ball for pocket play—must take the place of the usual attempt to send the two object-balls near each other by the top cushion. This one-ball control enters very largely into the preliminaries of top-of-the-table play. It mainly comprises a gently played cannon, to leave the red ball in favourable position by a top pocket for subsequent dealing with, and the driving of the first played object-white somewhere in the locality of the billiard spot. It means that you practically attain the cherished top-of-the-table position in one stroke, instead of the customary two or three. Like everything else, however, in which quickness plays a leading part, there is not the same underlying soundness about this method as there is in the slower, but surer, two-or-three-strokes one. You cast your first object-ball to the winds to entirely depend on the pace and accuracy of your stroke on the second object-ball. Anything like an error in either of these two respects, let alone the ever-present possibility of a combination of mistakes, and good-bye to your "break." It is full of pitfalls, is this one-ball control, demanding no little skill and knowledge of its manipulator.

A nice example of a stroke of this kind may be seen on Fig. 167. There it is plain that the cannon must be played, the idea, however, of the after-leave being more

obscure. You could take a risk of opening up optional

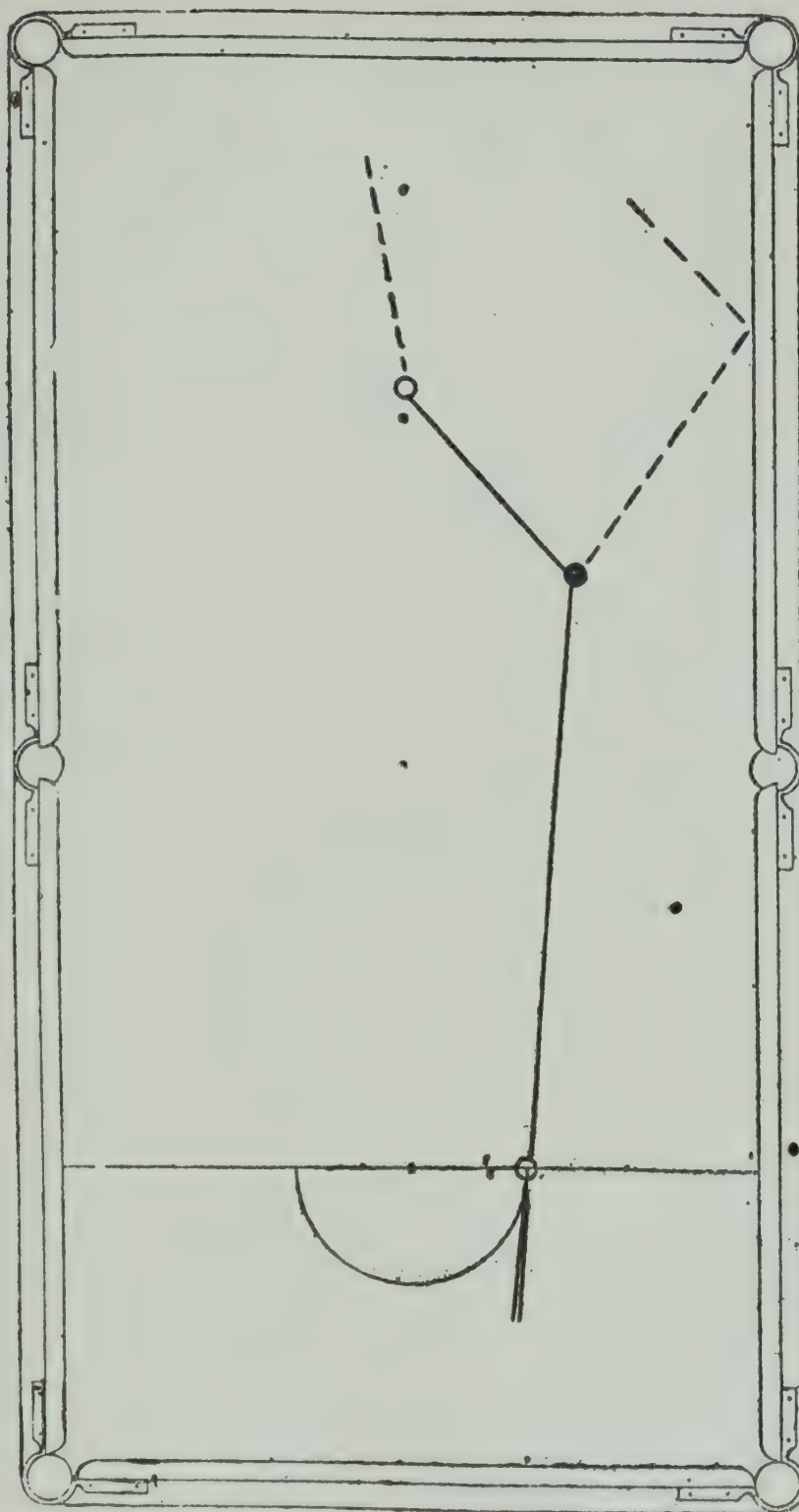


FIG. 167.—A cannon directly leading up to top-of-the-table position. The red ball is placed for a winning hazard in the right top pocket with the object-ball in close attendance to the billiard spot.

losing hazard in either corner pocket by a medium pace

ball-to-ball cannon. But that play would be quite unsound. The best billiards is that which keeps the game simple and leads to the least possible disturbance of the balls. So a slow shot, aiming half-ball at the red from the right extremity of the D, using a little right "side" with the idea of dropping full on the object-white, will be in accordance with such precept. The "side" will make the cue-ball strike the red more fully than the half-ball contact you aim for. The red will be sent on to the side cushion, to come off again so as to make it workable with the right corner pocket. Dropping fully on the object-white, the cue-ball stops dead, but the former ball is pushed on by the billiard spot, and a connection with the top-of-the-table game is made. What features the stroke possesses may be disposed of in a few words. The vital point is not to leave the red ball behind you. You may make all sorts of blunders in the manner of your cannoning on the second ball, but as long as the red ball is driven onwards by the necessary fullish stroke it ought always to occupy a playable location.

Another position which does not admit of the object-balls running together as the effect of a cannon is that on Fig. 168. The white ball is too far up the table. Again, it is the game to throw over the white and trust absolutely to your handling of the red ball for your after-position. By a very pretty stroke, a cannon on the second ball by the medium of the top cushion, you may drive this over by the right top pocket. A slow ball, carrying "drag" and a lot of right "side," is needed. As it takes the cushion it will, if the impact there be well judged, kick the red along the top cushion in the desired direction, while the cue-ball will run out

a little way down the table in a commanding position.

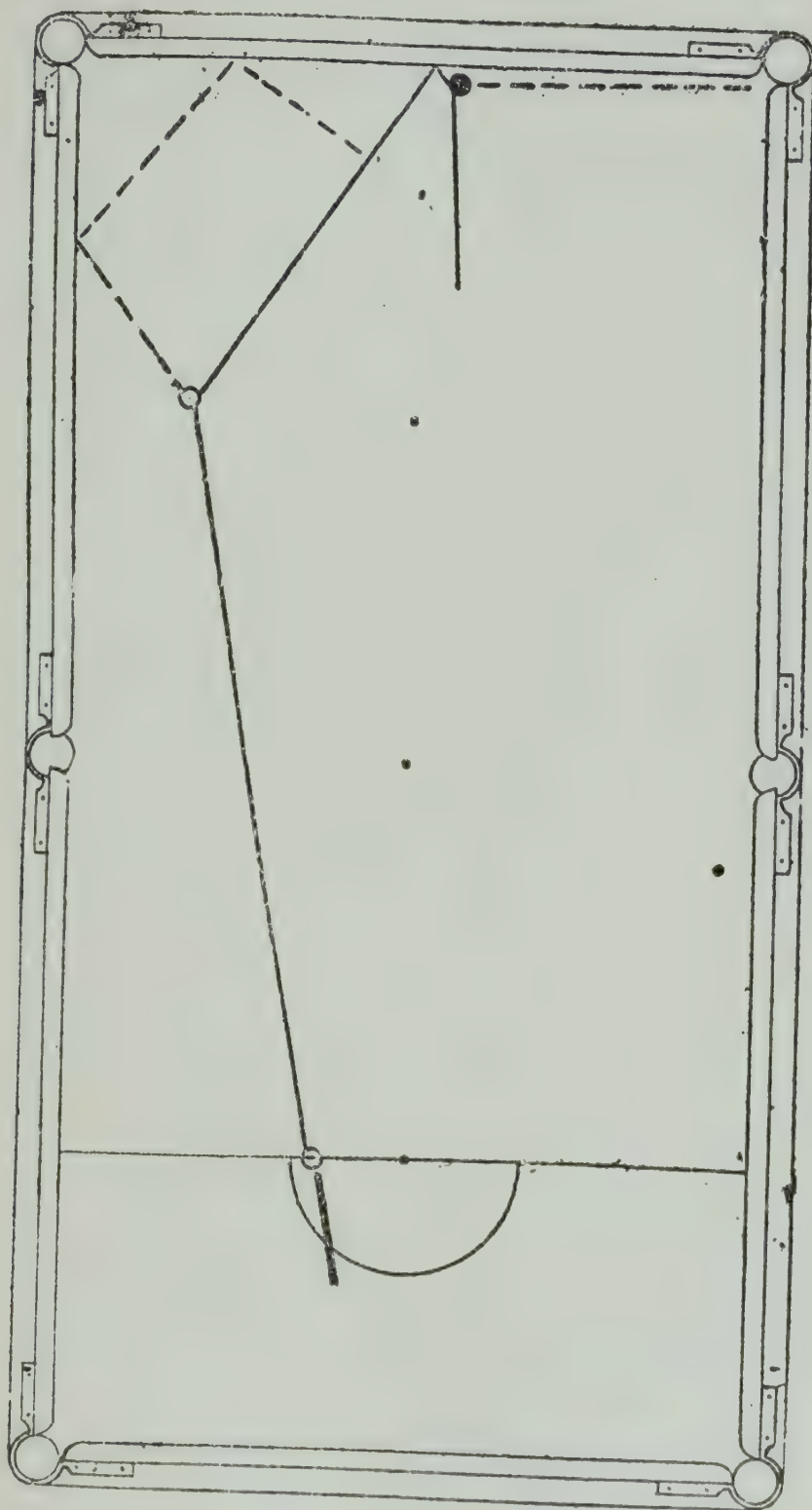


FIG. 168.—Another cannon paving the way for top-of-the-table play. Again the red ball is steered by a top pocket, and the object-white by the billiard spot.

Once more the top-of-the-table position results from

VOL. II.

Z

this single stroke, as the object-white crosses over to the top cushion near the spot.

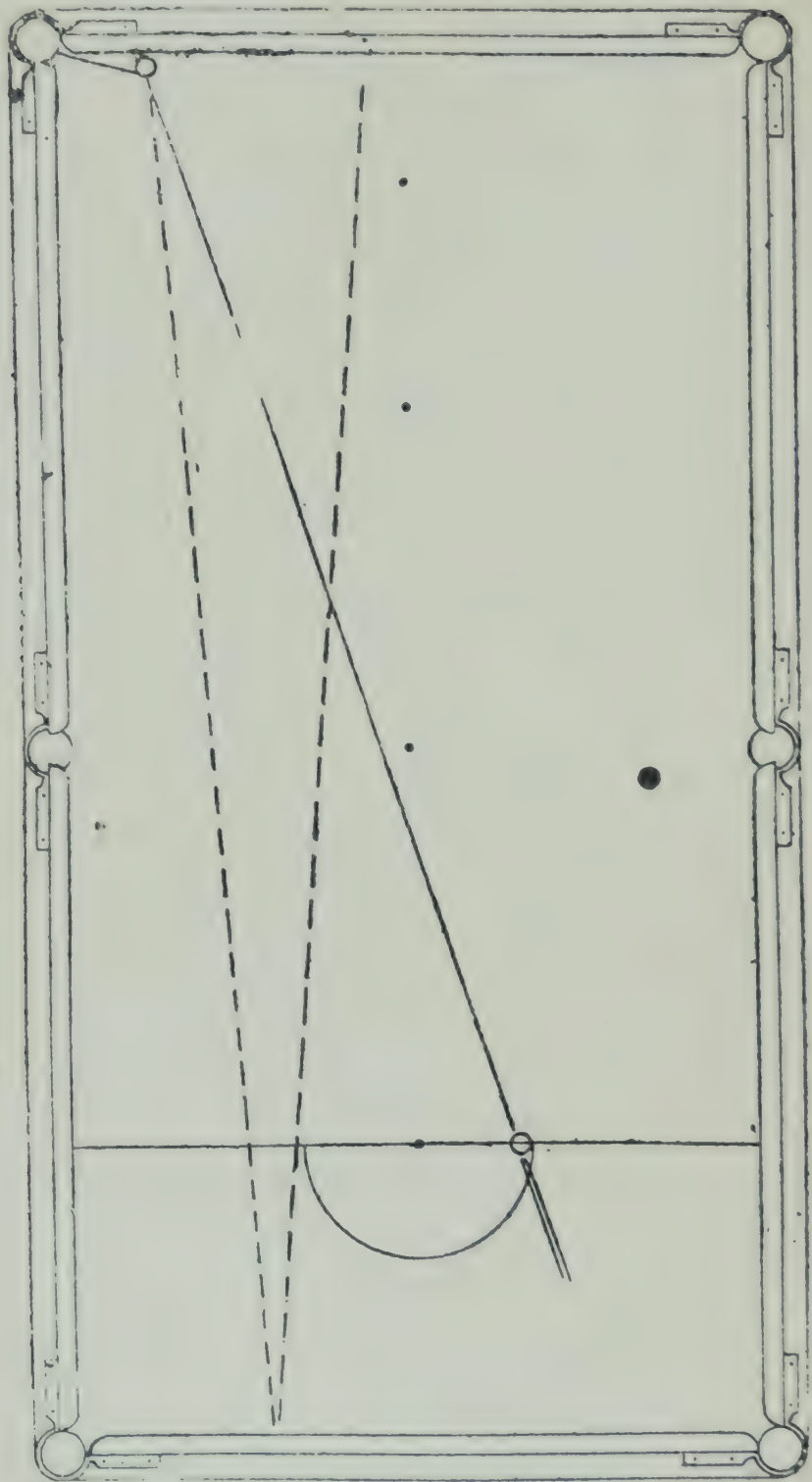


FIG. 169.—A forcing losing hazard doubling the object-white twice the length of the table, and causing it to stop near the billiard spot.

A favourite means of getting the balls to the head of

the board is that illustrated by Fig. 169. It is a speciality of stroke with Charles Dawson, who seldom or never fails to bring about the desired end. He swings in forcibly off the white, so gauging the direction and run of the latter that it must double down and up the table to finally stop somewhere near to the centre of and by the top cushion. This proceeding looks a cold-blooded one to the spectators, when the stroke puts in its periodical appearance. The red ball fills their eyes with a kind of hypnotic effect. If they were playing they would not see the white ball at all, for that "loser" off the red would assert its claims too strongly. But the climax that comes with the insertion of the red ball in the middle pocket with the second shot, and the running up the table of the cue-ball to administer the alternating "winner" and "cannon," makes them rub their eyes, to murmur inwardly, "Things are not always what they seem." This "double-strength" play on the object-white is safer and surer than any slow, dragging stroke. The latter is very provocative of a "kiss"—a certain spoiling of the desired hazard. Whenever the object-ball is close to the top cushion in these top-pocket losing hazards, it is far and away the soundest policy to play them at "double strength," and send them in and out of baulk.

Fig. 170 exhibits a very similar stroke to that on Fig. 168. Its principles are practically one and the same. Whenever you get your second object-ball close to the side cushions it pays best to take the middle course of playing from the first ball on to the cushion before cannoning. As in all such shots, "side" must be used in the direction which the cue-ball is travelling. The

stroke I show is a good specimen of its kind. A fullish

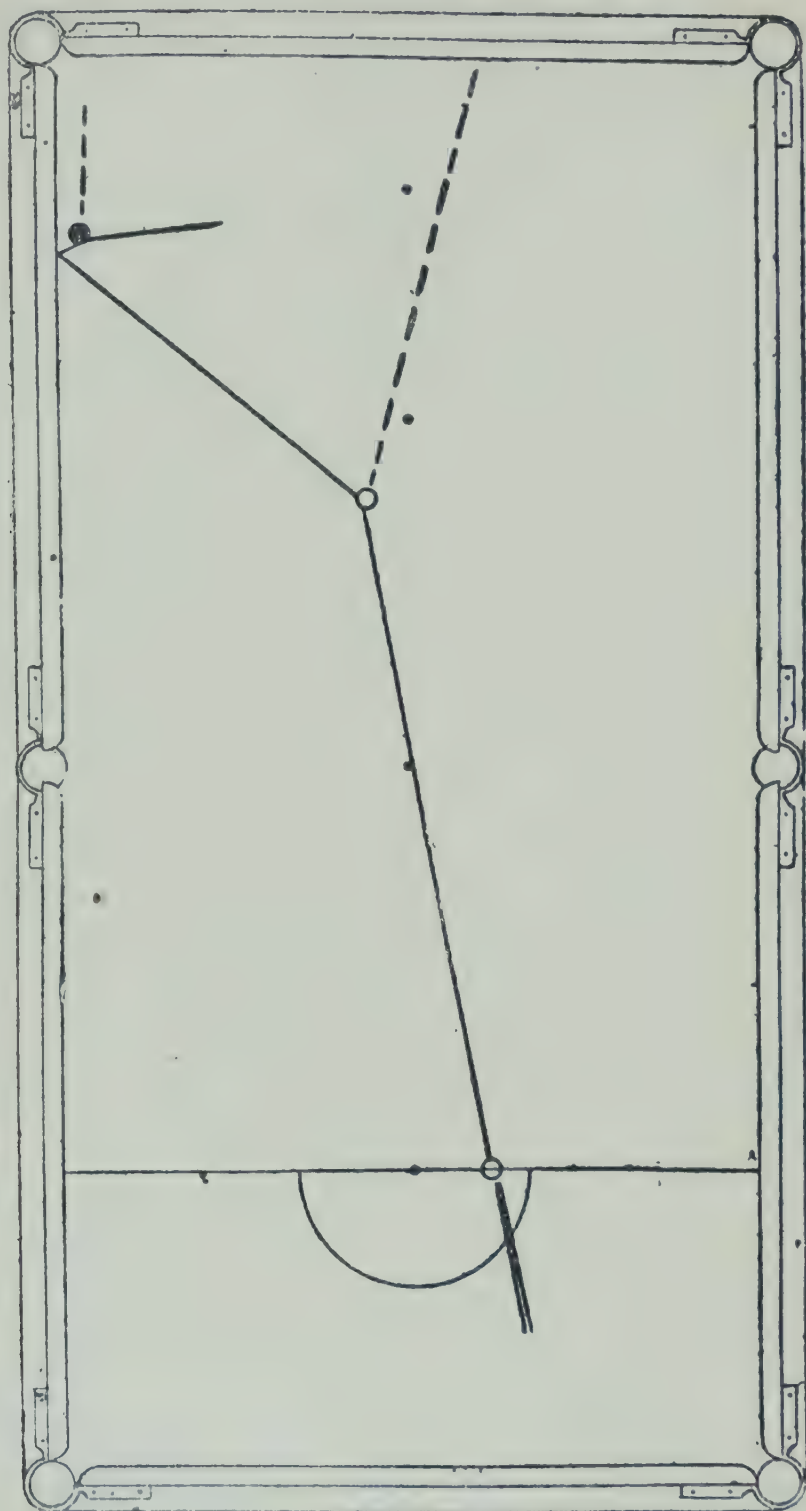


FIG. 170.—Cushion cannon driving the red ball towards the left top pocket, and the object-white by the billiard spot—a promising top-of-the-table opening.

contact with the object-white to move it up by the billiard spot, making the angle to the cushion more

obtuse—or more narrow as billiard players know it—

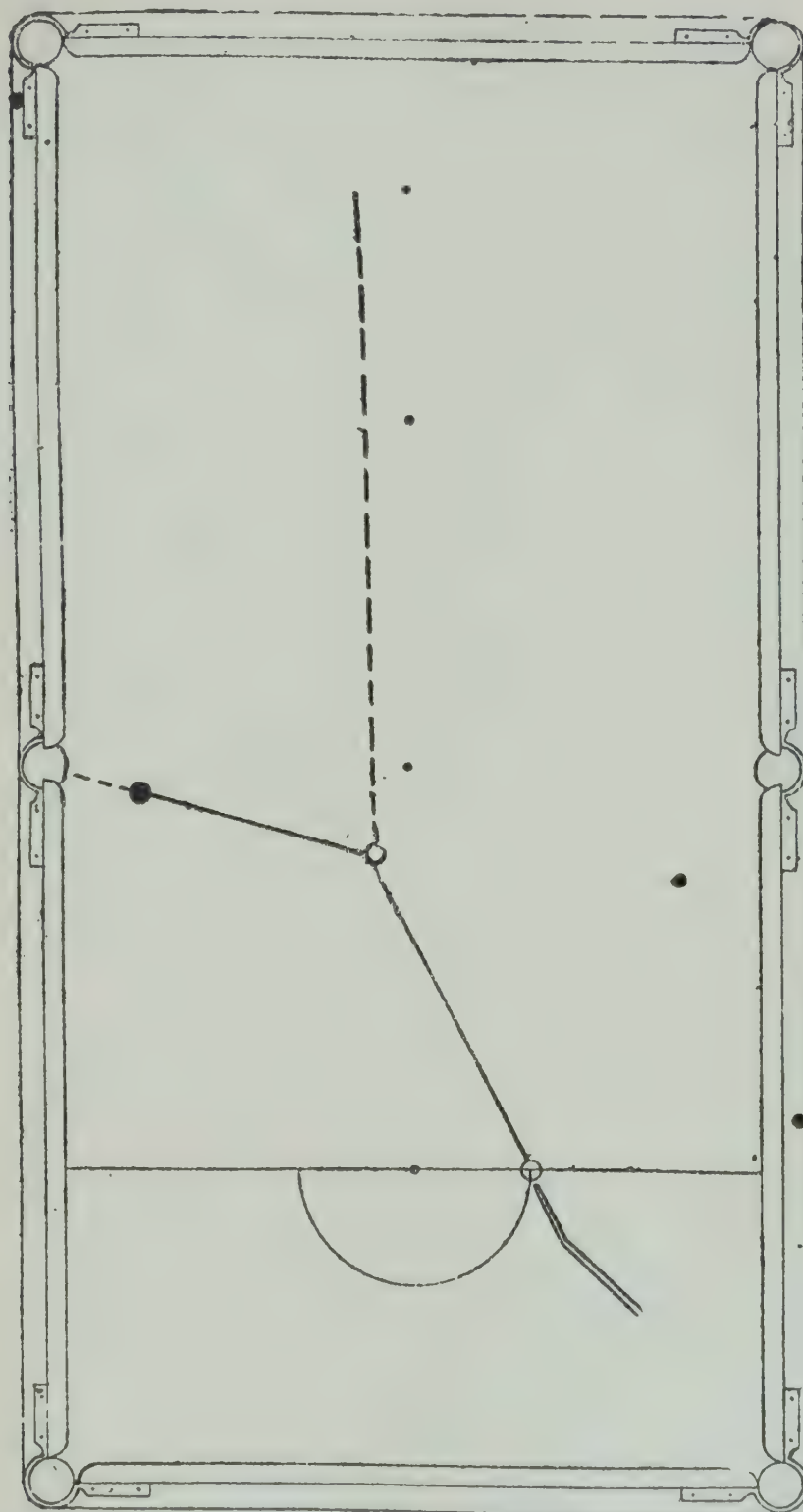


FIG. 171.—A daring attempt to gain top-of-the-table position.

than the natural half-ball one ; plenty of right “drag” “side” ; a very slow running ball which has little else

but the "side" working on it as it reaches the cushion is needed in the stroke. The cue-ball will work out towards the centre of the table, the red will be pushed up by the left top pocket, the object-white will come to rest in the neighbourhood of the billiard spot, with the net result that the top-of-the-table position is in the hollow of your hand.

One of the most daring of these one-ball control shots may be seen on Fig. 171. The red ball is close by a middle pocket, with the object-white permitting the simplest of cannons on to it. It is by no means easy, though, when you want to get in the train of top-of-the-table play. First of all, the white has to be played by a half run-through, with the idea of the heavy impact taking most of the steam out of the cue-ball, the pace of which has to be so regulated that it only moves the red an inch or two forward towards the middle pocket. Meanwhile the object-white has practically had all the impetus on the cue-ball transmitted to it, and it goes up by the billiard spot. An insertion of the red ball leads once more to the top-of-the-table form of points production.

Another stroke which is always cropping up, and which may be placed in the category of "drop-cannon" variations, arises when one object-ball is on, or close by, the top cushion, and the other a little way above the middle pockets. Neither ball admits of a losing hazard being played off it, and a cannon is the sole scoring medium. Fig. 172 gives a representation of the position I mean.

The red ball is too much over to the right side of the table, and the white too far away from the corner

pocket, for losing-hazard play, as I have said. So the

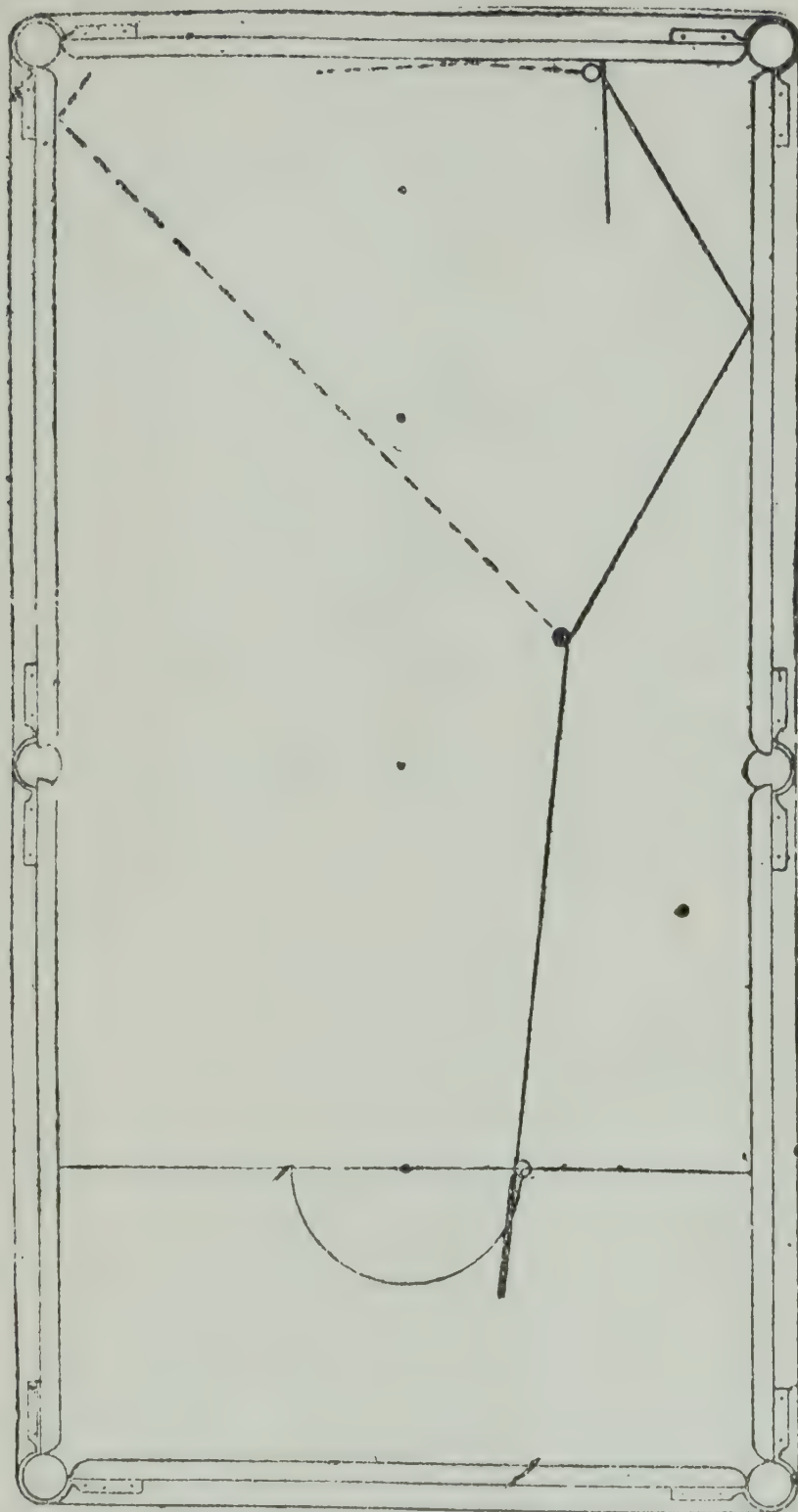


FIG. 172.—A variation of the "drop cannon" leading to a top-of-the-table position.

cannon is a necessity. You will see the stroke occur and recur during the course of a professional match

when the players are trying to get an inlet to top-of-the-table work. It is easy enough to make the cannon, yet by no means so easy to gain the desired position. Very delicate manipulation is required. The red ball must be cut very thinly, so as to place it somewhere by the further top pocket, while the cue-ball must be loaded with an intense amount of "side" to give it as much run from the side cushion as possible, and at the same time to narrow the line of its send-off from it. Only enough pace is needed to carry the red ball to its destination, therefore the stroke is a very gentle one. Don't forget the "drag" to preserve your "side" and to keep the cue-ball in the line of your aim, for the more slowly you play the more will the nap of the cloth affect its running. One of the principal effects of this cannon is to leave the object-balls in front of the player. Dropping anywhere on the approach side of your second object-ball, this must come about. Thus, though more in the nature of a one-ball control stroke, this cannon from the side cushion also possesses some of the best points of the direct "drop cannon." Once one gets some sort of a mastery over it, a similar stroke may be played from two or three positions. Such as Fig. 173, for example. Here we have the red ball well placed for a long losing hazard. But the object-white, as before, is on the top cushion, and, in its own individual regard, quite out of play. You can bring it into the scoring area again by one of two shots—the losing hazard from the red framing the balls up for the direct "drop cannon," or the cannon by the side cushion. The losing hazard is in a measure, a cumbersome method, for you take two strokes to get the white in working order, whereas the

cannon will do so in one. In this instance I advise the

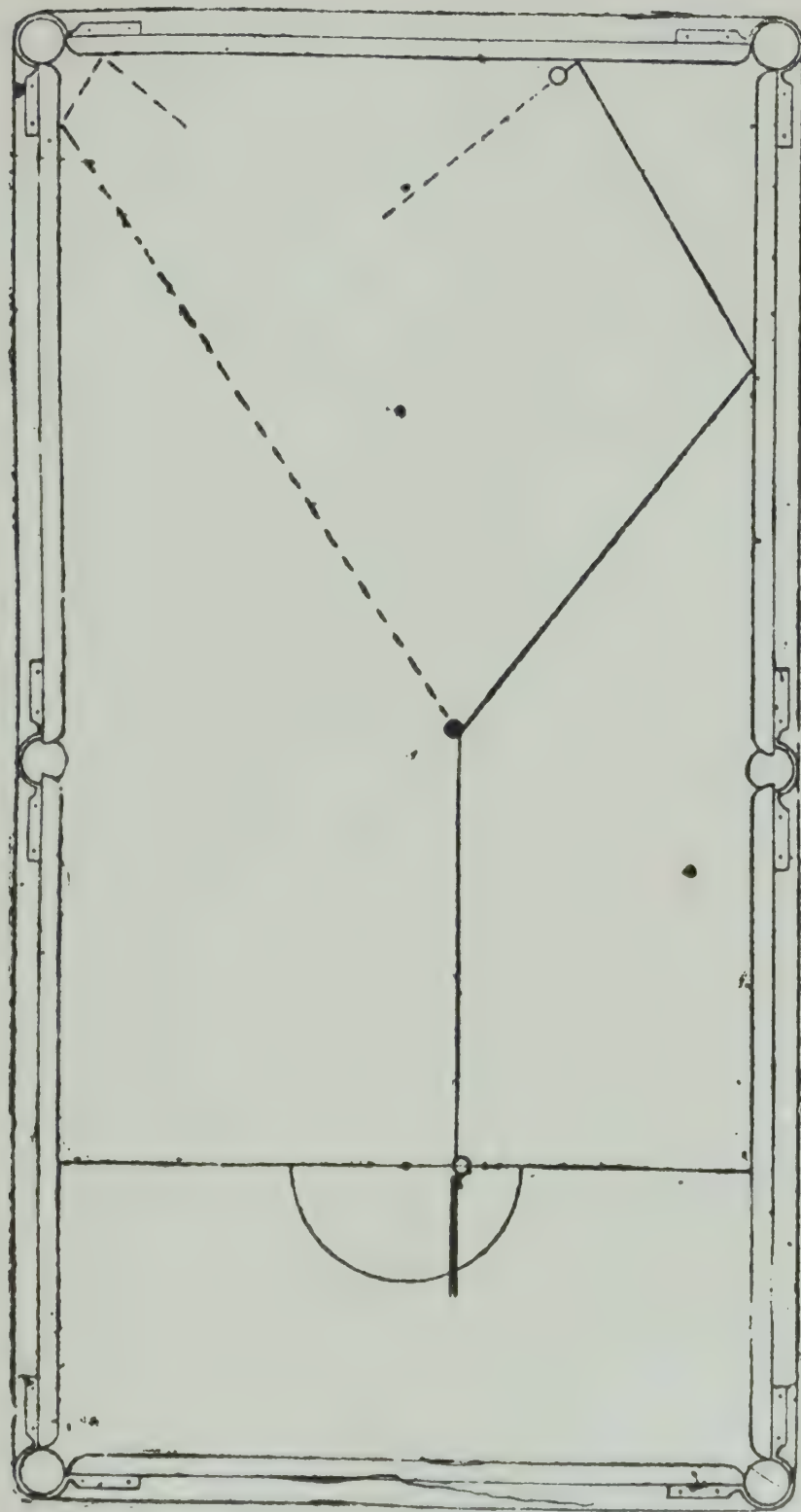


FIG. 173.—Another "drop-cannon" variation leading to top-of-the-table position.

policy of the cannon. I think it is the sounder game.

You will have to play the stroke very badly indeed if you do not "leave" yourself some sort of a pretty certain score on. You have so many chances. Firstly, you have the red winner. If the red comes a bit further down the table than you intended, you may then make a "loser." Thirdly, there is always a distinct prospect, although it may not always materialize, of a cannon being left "on." So, with the "leave" at the head of the table serving as a stepping-stone "out of the wet" in both break-making systems, I advocate the playing of this cannon under the given conditions.

Before dropping this particular stroke, I think that to throw more light on the most essential part of it—the method of gauging the location of the red ball, as, after all, the making of the cannon is a comparatively simple affair—will not be unwelcome to those who may develop an interest in it. The chief thing to avoid is causing the red to hit the top cushion too soon. Cut it away over to the side cushion as much as you can, that is, while maintaining your hold upon the cannon. If you can measure your stroke so well as to drop the red on the cushion about a foot below the corner pocket, and with just enough pace on it to bring it out somewhere about midway in the corner—that is, standing out centrally from the pocket—you have handled it perfectly. Perfection, however, seldom comes to the fore in billiard strokes, and only those who "do not know" expect it. Be satisfied to get the red somewhere by the pocket, but try to make it hit the side cushion near there. Fig. 174 will explain the reason of this side-cushion play, or it should, more eloquently than any amount of word spinning.

If the red ball is driven direct on to the top cushion it will drift away out of play under the side cushion, unless you have so gauged the run of the ball that it stops right by the pocket. This you will fail to do more often than not, considerably more. In billiards the great and abiding principle of playing for position is to allow as much margin as possible for the misjudgments of

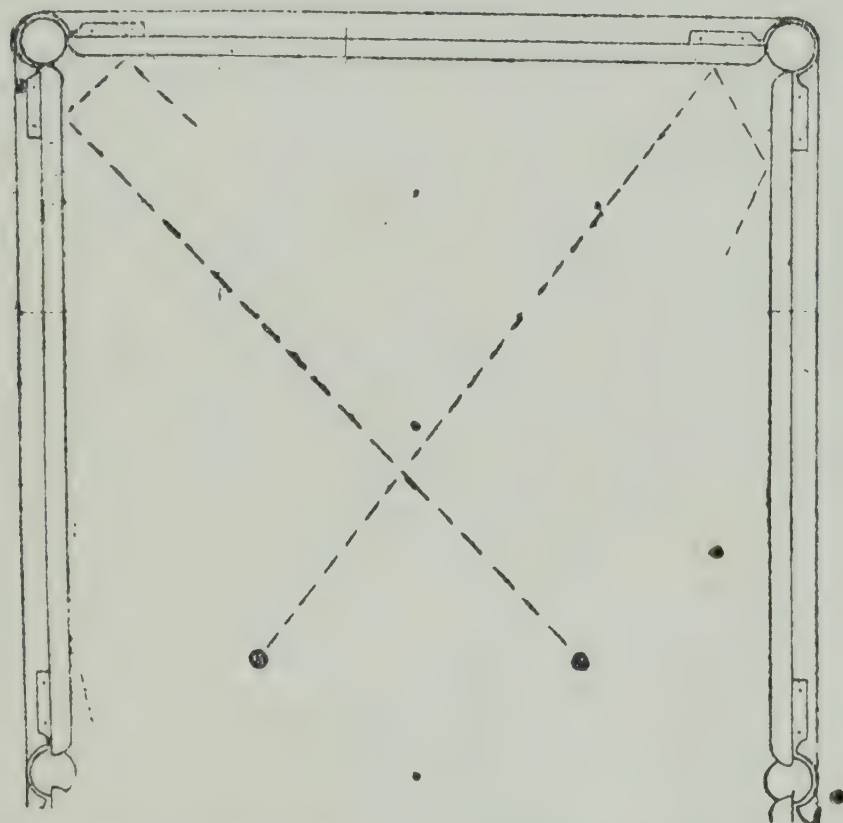


FIG. 174.—Showing the advantage of the ball hitting the side cushion first, as against the top cushion, to ensure its stopping near the pocket.

pace and direction that are inevitable. You give yourself next to none at all if the red ball first finds the top cushion in the form of cannon under discussion. But observe the very different aspect of affairs when the side cushion receives the red ball as it comes straight away from the impact of the cue-ball. It may run a foot further than you estimated for; all the same, it will never be far away from the pocket. It will circle around

and about the angles of the corner, and, what is all-important, remains there. In this case the "margin for misjudgment" is a very big one. A good look at Fig. 174 should show the salient features of the play, and the action of the red ball—desirable and undesirable. In each case the coloured ball is approximately travelling at the same pace. All these kinds of strokes are liable to send the first object-ball into the pocket by which you desire it to stop. As far as the red ball is concerned, not much harm is done, as when it comes up on the billiard spot the cue-ball should be in close touch with it, and the object-white as well, for the matter of that. But it is quite another thing when it is the red ball on the top cushion, and you have first to play on the object-white. Then, more than ever, you must pay the strictest attention to cutting it to the side of the table, if you are bound to play the cannon. Should a losing hazard be possible, however, you would not do amiss to throw the cannon over and go for the hazard if it is a surer factor in guarding the white from harm.

Now, in the natural course of the prefacing strokes to top-of-the-table play, I will give a couple of irregular cannons—irregular by reason of their uncommon appearance—which lead there. One is a very pretty run-through and powerful "side" stroke, that may be played on either side of the table. It is shown on Fig. 175.

Left-hand "side"—any amount of it—dropping full and slowly on the red, will pave the way for opening up a connection with the second object-ball, the "side" fairly pulling the cue-ball over to it. The red crosses the table to go near the opposite corner pocket, the white is pushed over towards the centre of the top cushion, and

the cue-ball should command the situation. On the other

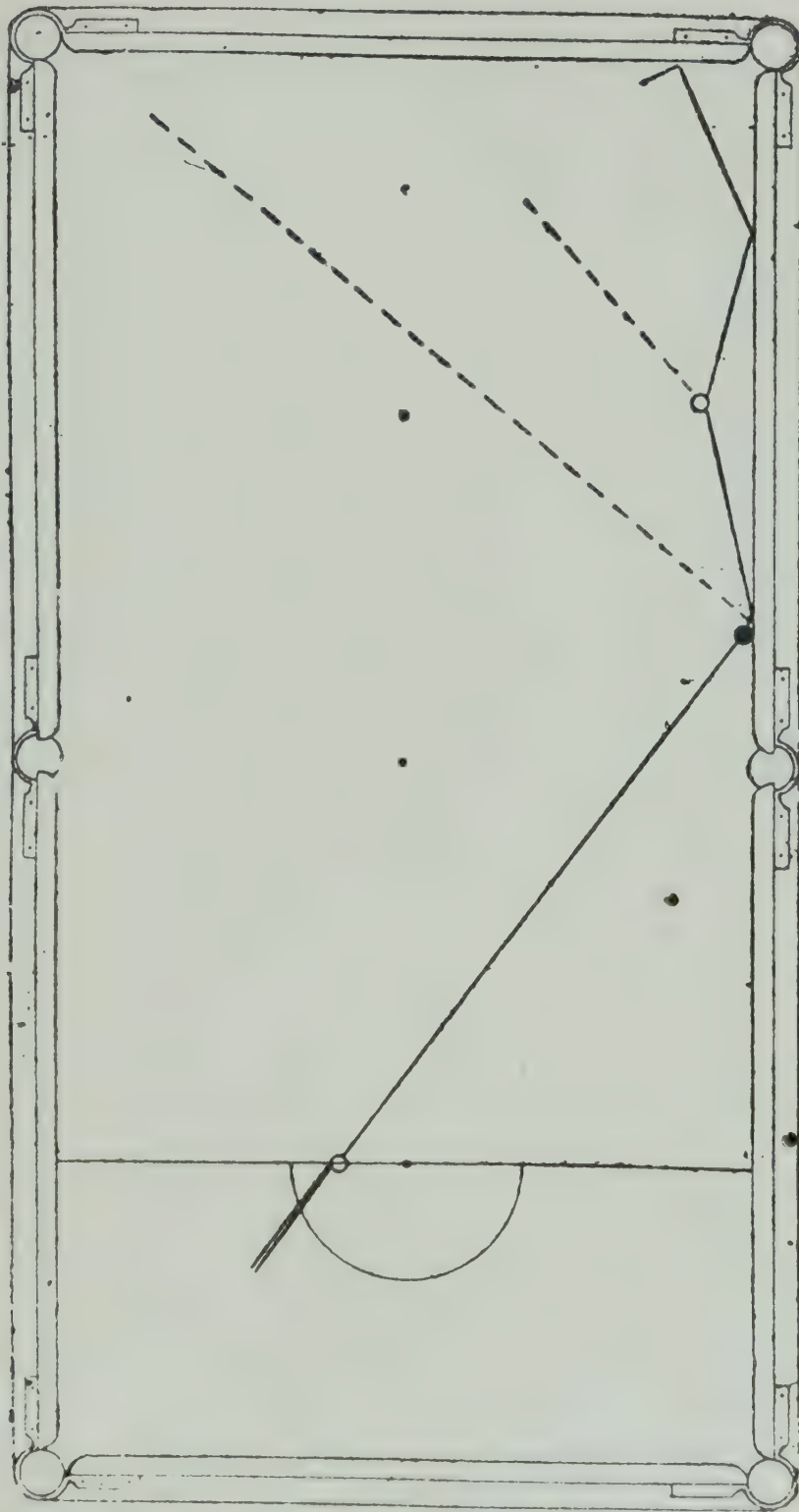


FIG. 175.—Run-through and “side” stroke leading to the top-of-the-table position.

side of the table right “side” would be used. Another shot that ensures a good “leave” at the head of the

table is a slow "kiss" cannon—quite a simple affair, and

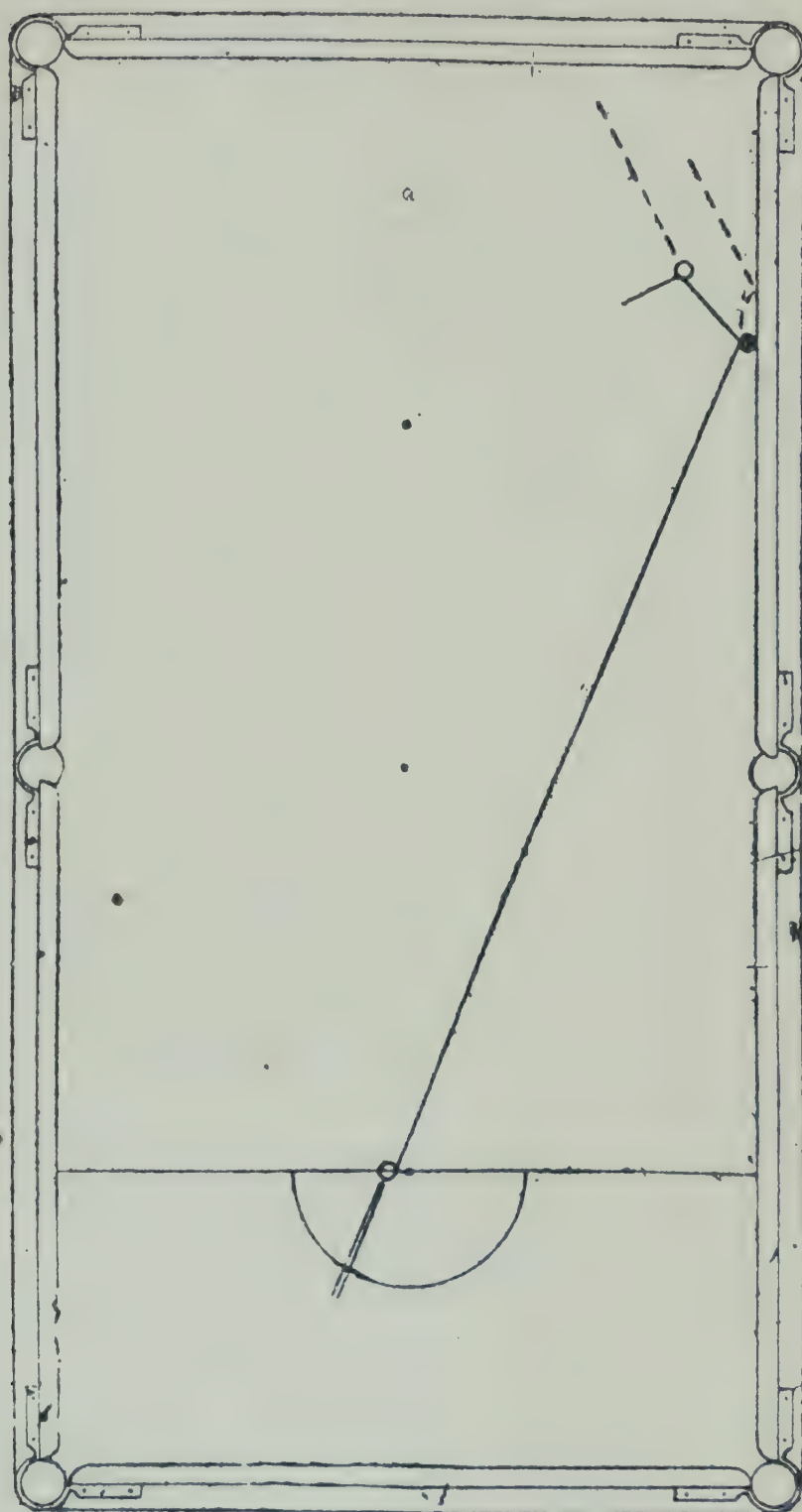


FIG. 176.—" Kiss " cannon, also giving an opening to the top-of-the-table position.

another one of Dawson's favourites. Drop slowly, with, if anything, a bit of right "side" to the cue-ball, half-

ball on the red. A double contact between the balls will ensue, with the result that the cue-ball rebounds over to the white to cannon, and the red is "squeezed" on to the cushion to run down by the corner pocket. This stroke is illustrated in Fig. 176.

I have stated often enough that a player should plan out a definite system of scoring, and not let himself be too much guided by the circumstances of the play. He must rather try and direct these into the channel that he desires. Play either by the "losing-hazard break" ways and means, or by the other alternative—the "top-of-the-table break." You may fancy the one more than the other, although your scoring may not appreciably differ by the application of either method. What you require chiefly is confidence in yourself and your manner of play. Confidence in billiards is an inestimably great quality. It will bridge for its possessor many a pathway over troublous happenings.

The working up the balls into position for top-of-the-table play demands a great measure of confidence in the performer. The temptations to "mix up" his game are many and recur frequently. An instance of the "optional game" that is continually cropping up may be seen on Fig. 177.

The player with his ball "in hand" can take his choice of the kind of game that he thinks will pay him best. If he has "top-of-the-table" intentions, then he simply drops gently in off the object-white, cutting it to the centre of the top cushion.

But previous to that performance he must have assured himself—that is, if he played with his head at all—that he could put down the red at his next stroke.

Accession No: 1670

U.D.C. No: 7947/MANL

Date: 5-7-81

I mean putting it down as the exigencies of the top-of-

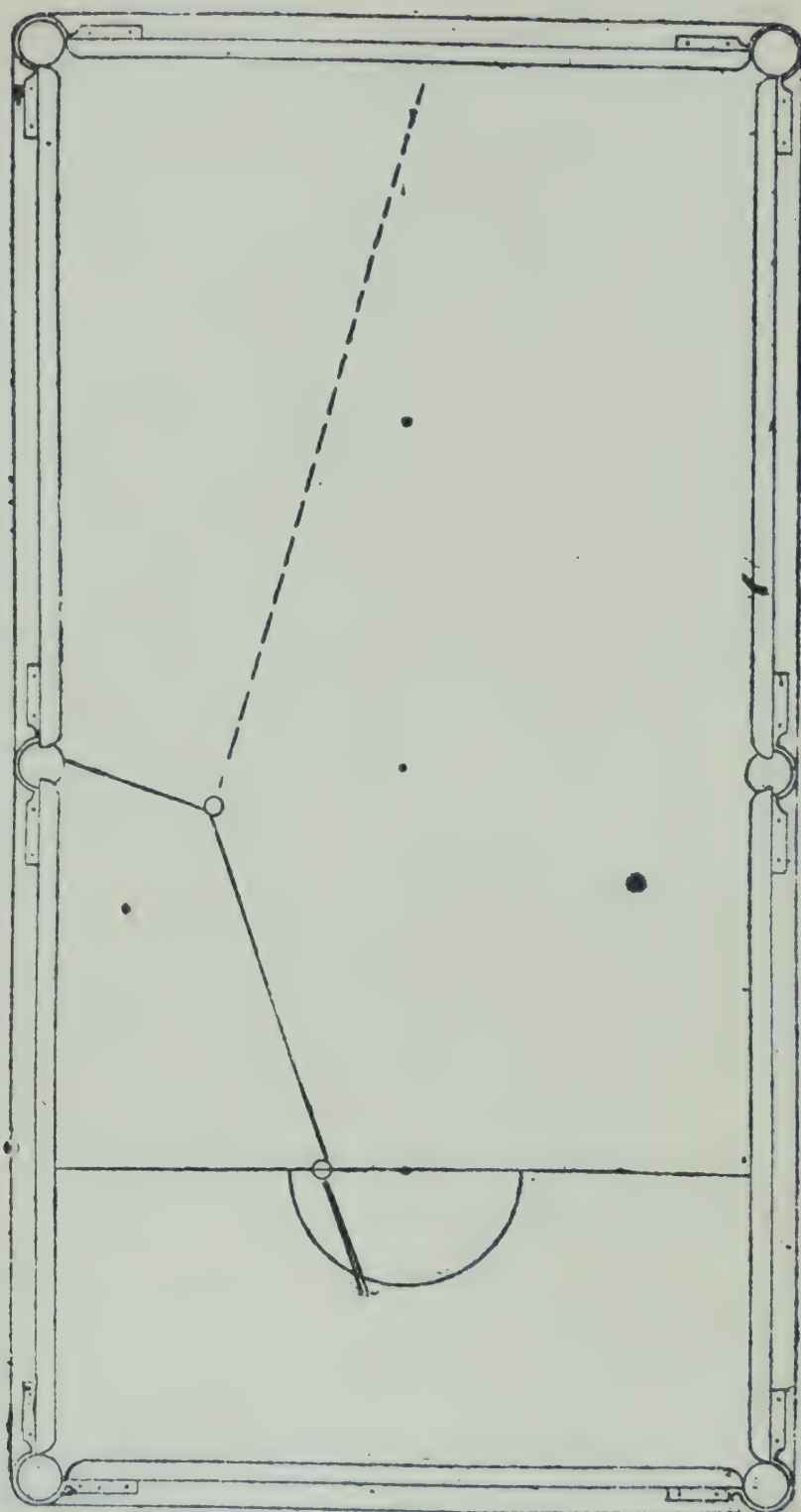


FIG. 177.—An optional position. The player selects the top-of-the-table game by steering the object-white on the centre of the top cushion. He has confidence in his ability to put the red ball in the right middle pocket at his next stroke.

the-table play demands—not a straight-away full ball on

the red, which is as likely as not to bring about a six-shot by both cue-ball and red falling in the middle pocket. For I want it to be distinctly understood that in writing of such an intricate subject as top-of-the-table play—or, rather, manœuvring to lead up to it—I am not appealing to the class of player who tries this winning hazard at the direct full ball. I am showing these finer points of the game for the player who strikes a hazard well enough to spot his ball out of the direct line, so that the cue-ball can be sent to the head of the table, and not into the middle pocket or on to the side cushion. Of course, it makes the stroke very much more difficult than when played by the ordinary full ball. That is the reason of the professional players so often coming to grief at their middle-pocket winning hazards. Good after-position generally demands that all strokes should be made a little more difficult than they otherwise would be, but in no case so much as in these middle-pocket winning hazards, played from the D, to get one in touch with the top-of-the-table game.

Therefore it may be gleaned that the player has to take very seriously into consideration the position of the red ball, and what he knows—or thinks—he can accomplish in the way of winning hazards, before taking up with the top-of-the-table play. It will be very evident, I think, that, with the red right on the brink of the pocket, there need be no hesitation if, as I say, you place your reliance on the top-of-the-table game. The red is pretty nearly certain to go. Therefore, as seems only in accordance with its *rôle* of chief scoring ball, its position influences the game to the very fullest extent. You only make use of the object-white to further the

interests of your scoring from the red ball, which is the prime factor in the "top-of-the-table break" as much as it is in the losing-hazard break.

Reverting to the simple position shown on Fig. 177, I should like to point out that the cautious player, uncertain as to his ability to put down the red ball in the requisite style, would bring the object-white back from the top cushion in support of the red. His idea would be to bring it so far down the table as would allow of any easy angle cannon being formed—a stroke of the kind illustrated in Fig. 178.

If the white was not brought down far enough the first time, then a second "loser" should be played from it, always with the notion of getting it down in support of the red. The resultant cannon should simplify your passage to the head of the table, unless, of course, you adhered to the losing hazards. These must never be lost sight of, even though you intend to work the balls up to the billiard spot. Do not "top-of-the-table" at the expense of the easier losing hazard, until you have made all available use—as is consistent with making your position a commanding one in the direction you are aiming at—of them. Better to get to the top-of-the-table in two, three, or four certain strokes than one or two uncertain ones; better to play the plain losing-hazard game from end to end than tread the insidious paths of the "top-of-the-table" game. The latter may not be—and certainly is not—such a strain on the player as the constant losing hazards, and, moreover, the scoring is in a high degree quicker. But it cannot compare on the score of soundness, nor on the score of simplicity, with the old-fashioned losing-hazard play. And, I take

it, that the easier the game one takes up with, the better

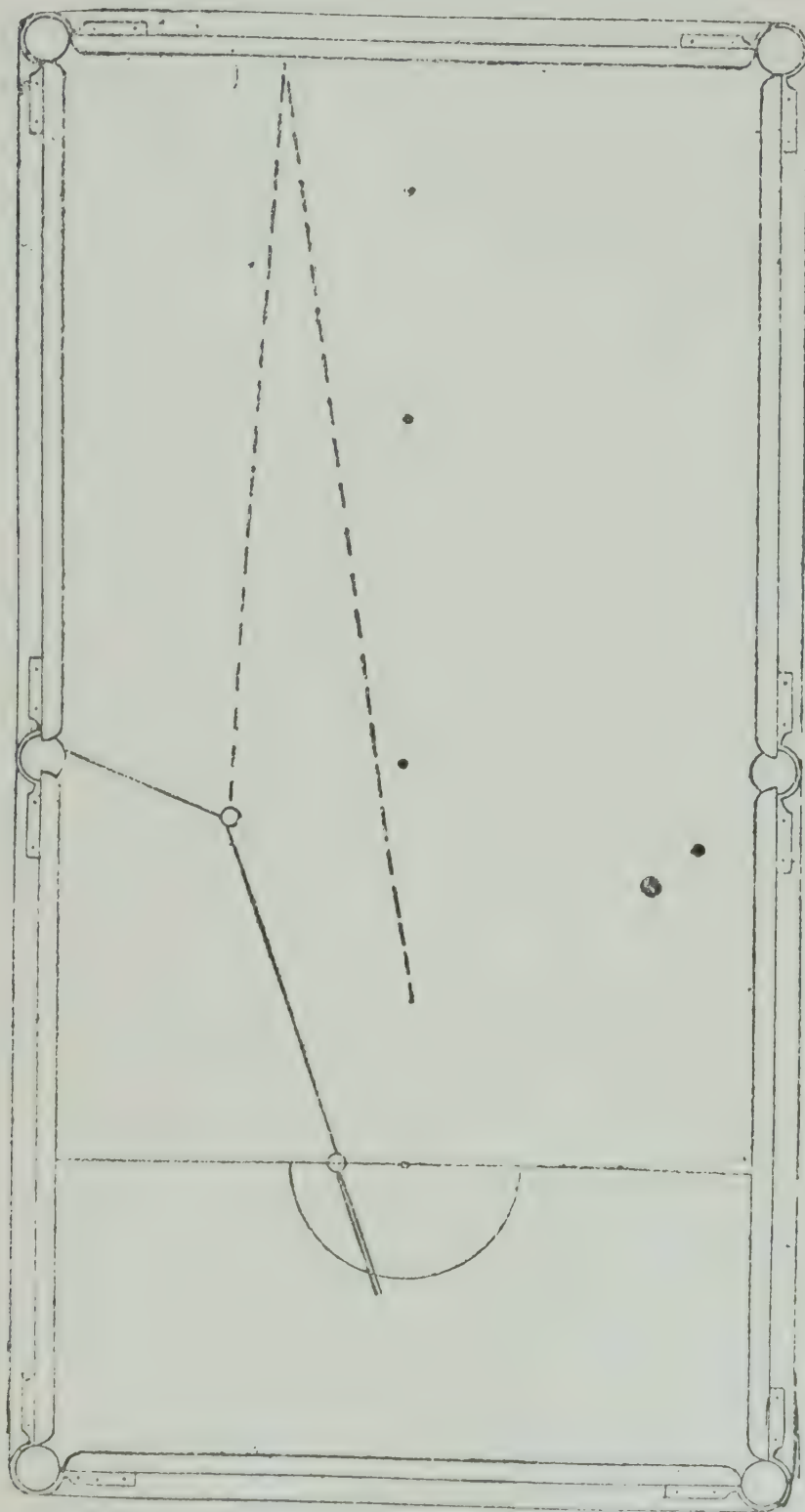


FIG. 178.—Bringing the white ball back in support of the red. The player flinches at the winning hazard the red ball affords him in the right middle pocket. This is justifiable caution.

the results for the amateur. He cannot afford the time

to play more than six hours a week, whereas the professional champions have spent that measure of time—and more—day after day.

On Fig. 179 I give a couple of positions which should go far to put my case as clearly as it is possible to do. The cue-balls and object-whites are supposed to be in parallel positions by either top pocket, and represent the stroke played in accordance with the red ball on their respective sides of the table. Thus the losing hazard made into the right top pocket, driving the object-white out by the billiard spot, is influenced by the fact that the red ball is lying just outside the middle pocket, awaiting a transference to the billiard spot. You can barely fail to get it there, and, at the same time, to send the cue-ball up in that vicinity—result: all three balls nicely adapted for top-of-the-table play.

The losing hazard into the left top pocket is of another kind altogether, and with a different second stroke in view. This time your red ball is not so promisingly placed for the winning hazard as in the case of the stroke on the other side. So the object-white is played thinly, to go over by the pyramid spot. Then, with another “loser” in the right top pocket from the D, you should bring it back somewhere by the red. These two strokes illustrate the cautious method of break-making to the full, and the maintenance of easy play.

Top-of-the-table play is merely a substitute—an inefficient one in its scoring aspect—for the defunct spot stroke. The guiding principle is the same, your game being to utilize the red ball for winning-hazard practice in the two corner pockets. The rules debar

more than two consecutive red winning hazards (unless

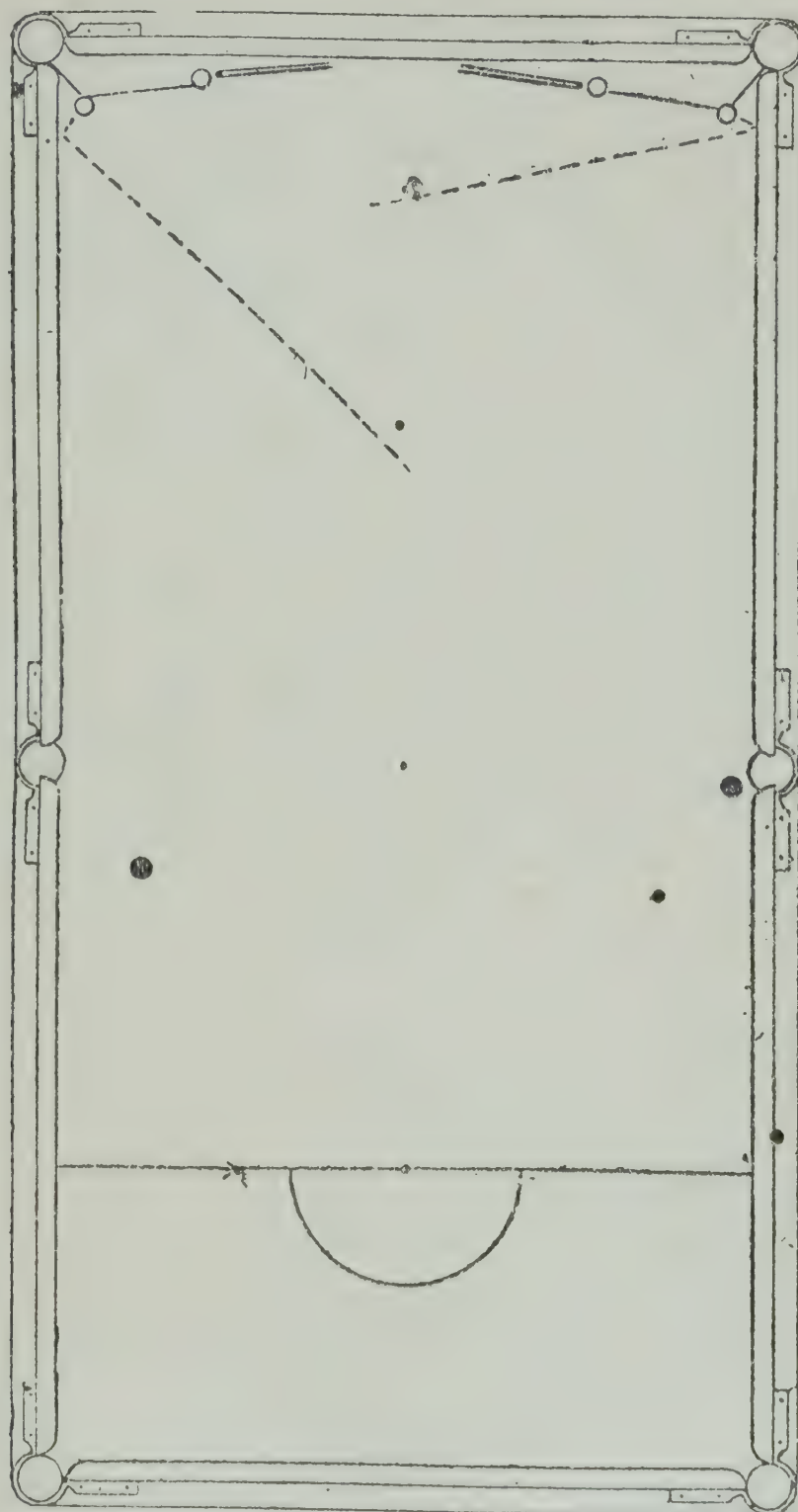


FIG. 179.—How the position of the red ball influences the style of play on the object-white. The object-balls are respectively paired on the right and left sides of the table. The one stroke shows the player confidently going out for the top-of-the-table position at once, and the other his more cautious game, as demanded by the greater difficulties of the subsequent winning hazard.

the player scores a five shot) from the billiard spot, the making of which sends the coloured ball on the middle spot. But by a subtle manœuvring of the object-white in conjunction with the red a distinct evasion of the law may be made. It enables one to keep the red ball at the head of the table by the agency of intermediate cannon play. As in the losing-hazard game, the red is still your scoring ball. Only when it gets out of hand, or seems likely to, do you call on the object-white. Winning hazards by the medium of the red ball are the very heart of the top-of-the-table game. The ratio of strokes should be two of these winning hazards to one of the connecting cannons—the cannons that put you in touch with your red ball again. How often does one hear during a big professional match the half-expressed note of surprise when an apparently ball-to-ball cannon at close range has been missed? How quickly, too, it turns into an amused titter as the red ball is seen trickling to, and dropping in, a corner pocket! The player has simply stood by the principles of the play—that is, not to unnecessarily use the object-white, and to score as much as possible off the red ball. Such strokes as are shown on Figs. 180, 181, 182, and 183 will illustrate my meaning to the full:—

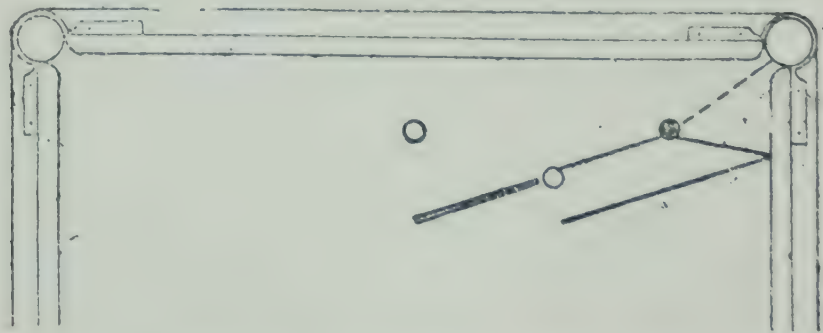


FIG. 180.—Putting red down, and getting behind the spot.

In the first place we have the red ball inserted into a corner pocket, with the cue-ball getting in line with it as it comes up on the spot by the medium of the side cushion. The next move

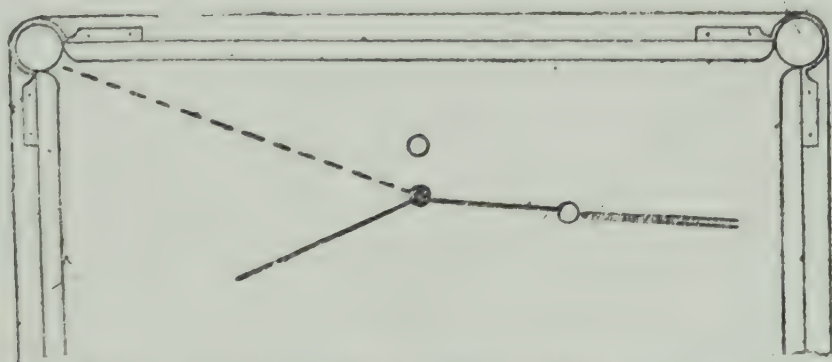


FIG. 181.—Potting red in further pocket, with a half-run-through shot.

is to again insert the red ball in the opposite corner pocket with a half-run-through shot to still keep the command of the balls. Now, another winning hazard, unless in conjunction with a cannon, would mean the relegation of the coloured ball to the middle spot and the consequent breaking up of the top-of-the-table position. So the playing of the cannon is a necessity to drop the red over by the further pocket.

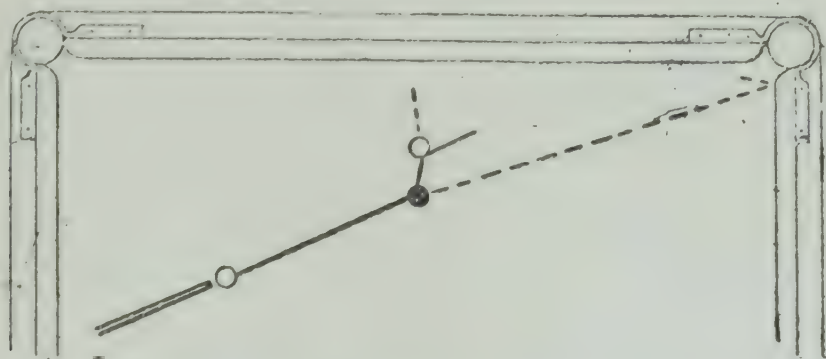


FIG. 182.—Cannon to place red for another winning hazard.

Thus you have two winning hazards to one cannon, and an adherence to the first principles of the top-of-the-table

game. The less you compel the use of the cannon the longer will you retain your hold over the balls, with an advantage to your scoring. The foregoing specimens are merely given to show the idea of the play, which from beginning to end is one incessant idea of working upon the red ball for winning hazards, and just as much (or little) cannon play to interlock their comfortable sequence.

As I have tried to impress, the winning hazards count for everything in the top-of-the-table working. Now and again we get a proficient in the art of close-cannon play, such as Stevenson, young William Cook, or Bateman, who manipulates lengthy "nurseries." They can, when circumstances are ripe, reel off their fifty, sixty, and seventy consecutive cannons with ease and despatch. So with them an occasional departure from the accepted top-of-the-table methods (the two winning hazards to one cannon) is justifiable. Still, in the ordinary way, they each and all pursue their top-of-the-table expositions according to rule, making the red ball the chief object of their attentions, and merely causing the object-white to keep them in the train of constant winning-hazard practice. A deadly precision at any and every, kind of hazard striking is needed before one can be advised to try for top-of-the-table positions when competitively engaged at billiards. What you attempt, in practising the system is another thing entirely, for you will thereby go far to gather something of the true inwardness of its difficulties and entanglements—its snares and delusions.

One of the chief requisites is an ability to make winning hazards, using intense "side" on your ball, at

difficult angles. "Cuts" along the cushion, with running "side," and the thinnest of thin strokes with reverse "side." To play the top-of-the-table game right up to the hilt, to thoroughly follow in its train, you must "down" the red ball whenever the stroke is possible. No flinching from it, but set your mind to it that "it is the game," and that you have to do so. You will frequently come across strokes of the character depicted on Fig. 183.

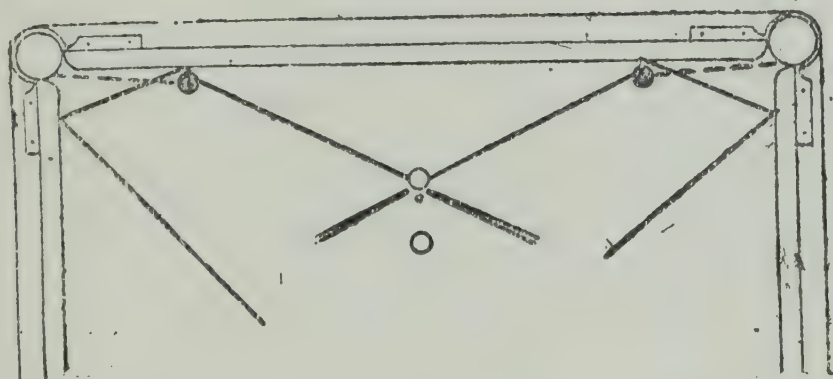


FIG. 183.—Cutting red along cushion into the corner pockets, using running "side."

You have no option (if you have determined upon the top-of-the-table game in preference to the more simple losing-hazard one) but to "cut" the red ball in using intense running "side" to make your ball take the corner of the table, and come away to command the situation for the next stroke. On Fig. 183 this stroke is shown on both sides of the table, with the run of the cue-ball as it drops the red and works out to its assigned position.

In either case there is an easy run-through losing hazard "on," judging the situation in a "losing-hazard game" light, instead of the ever so much more difficult "winner" the top-of-the-table play demands. A nice

and very fair contrast between the two methods is here provided.

Then there are the "cuts" with reverse "side," such as Fig. 184 represent.



FIG. 184.—Reverse, or check, "side" thin "cut."

None but an expert hazard-striker could afford to play for such "winners," which require a mere brushing of the red ball, and which, if failure attends the effort, means "leaving" it right in the jaws of the pocket. Here, again, under other conditions, the losing hazard would be simple and sure.

In both instances of these winning hazards, played with strong running and reverse "side," it is not so much the "strength" you use that gives the cue-ball a position, as the play of the bias on the cushion. Either stroke is of the well-under-medium pace variety, that is verging on a very slow running ball. The running "side" one shows an accelerated pace as the top-cushion is met, and a similar effect and a more oblique course of the cue-ball as it rebounds from it—as per the figure. This "side" effect, first on a slanting and then on a facing cushion, I have explained.

With regard to the reverse "side" thin strokes, the encountering of a facing cushion, although there is a lot of run on the cue-ball, seeing that it has met with such

little resistance from the lightly touched red, checks the speed tremendously. Dead as ditch water it comes off, returning well inside the natural angle of reflection from the banking. Again I ask a reference to the figure.

As I pointed out in my prefatory handling of this top-of-the-table game, there are two ideal positions of the balls to work up to. The one that is of primary importance takes this shape :

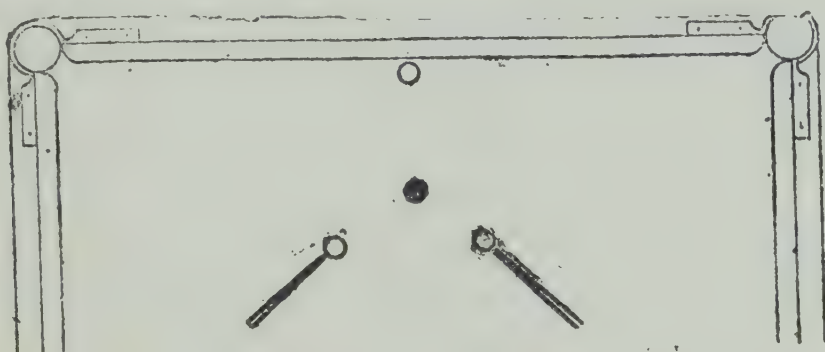


FIG. 185.—*The ideal top-of-the-table position—cue-ball below billiard spot, object-white on top cushion.*

The red ball is spotted, with the object-white lying behind it on, or hard by, the top cushion, with the cue-ball nicely placed for a cannon or winning hazard below the line of the billiard spot. That is *the* ideal position. The other position, also a most favourable one, though falling short of the perfection of No. 1, is after this fashion :

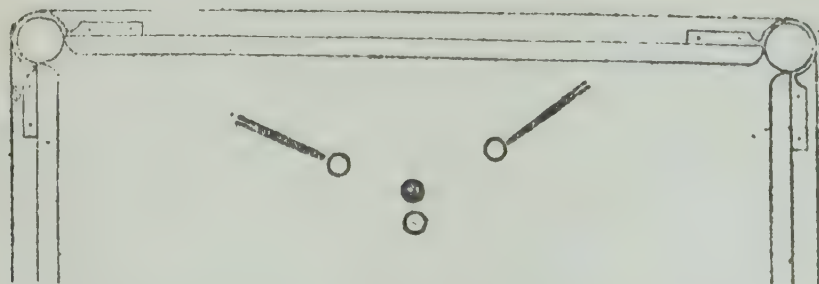


FIG. 186.—*Second position—cue-ball above billiard spot.*

Here the cue-ball lies above the billiard-spot line,

practically changing places with the object-white. This is the exception to a good rule in top-of-the-table play, which asks for the cue-ball to always come below the billiard spot as it comes into position after putting down the red. In fact, if a direct line was drawn from side cushion to side cushion through the billiard spot, and the interior space between it and the top cushion were held to be prohibitive ground for the cue-ball as it made its various top-of-the-table winning hazards, not much fault could be found. For lying above the line of the billiard spot the cue-ball is almost denied the use of the all-essential winning hazard. It is out of its latitude, as only a cannon, the stroke that must be made the least possible use of, is now available. Still, in the top-of-the-table passages it is occasionally "the game" to "leave" the balls in the way of the second position, with the cue-ball above the two object ones.

Why I term the first position *the* ideal position is simple of explanation. Being close to the top cushion the object-white cannot escape from its proximity to the billiard spot, as it does when lying below that landmark. Two or three of the connecting cannons will then drive it down the table by the pyramid spot line, or even further. Then you have to get it back again by the exercise of some play from the D, or some complicated stroke or other in mid-field.

With the object-white lying behind the billiard spot, near to, or on, the top cushion, a very different condition of things exists. The top cushion is a barrier to its escape. Get it fixed there, and a skilled top-of-the-table (and often a quite inferior one) will employ it with beneficial results for the recurring position cannon, as

a relief to the strokes of red in from corner to corner pocket. Dropping full on the practically imprisoned ball, you give it no loophole for escape. Your ball is in front of it, and the top cushion behind it. Between the two it is penned in. When "tight up" against the cushion you have it in the hollow of your hand. Full on it your ball falls, and "pinches" or "squeezes" it against the cushion, which returns the pressure. With the two outside forces directed against it the object-white is helpless, and it is perforce obliged to keep in its old place—on the cushion.

One of the most vital points in connection with top-of-the-table play is the avoidance of a "covering" or "masking" of the balls. The delicate cannons one is forced to make cause this state of things to be ever likely to happen. Even the most finished exponents of this intricate branch of billiards often find the "covering" of the balls beating them out of the position they have gained, and frequently to force them to hand over the control of the table to their opponents. The annexed figure (187) shows a few examples of what I mean by a "covering" or "masking" of the balls. Not a very promising collection for a score, are they?

But, as in other matters, these unwished-for positions arise from bad or poorly played strokes. As I have said often enough—too often, perhaps—there is a right way and a wrong way of playing every stroke on the board. For instance, take *the* ideal position. The cue-ball may fluctuate about in a two-inch or so radius, though always being in a position to command the cannon. You may have a plain half-ball stroke "on," or right "side" and a fullish, or left "side" and a thinnish, contact with the

red. To drop the latter by the corner pocket, and keep

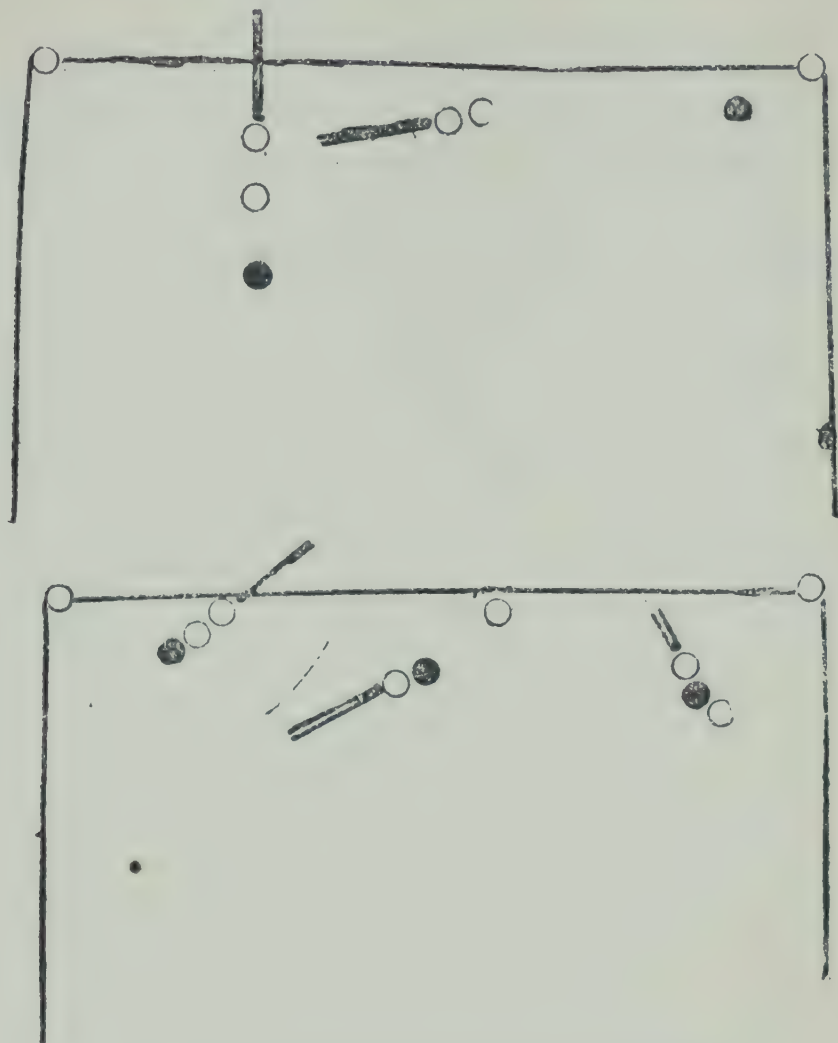


FIG. 187.—Groups of "covered" positions.

the object-white from impeding the direct passage of the cue-ball to it, is your aim in these operations—so—

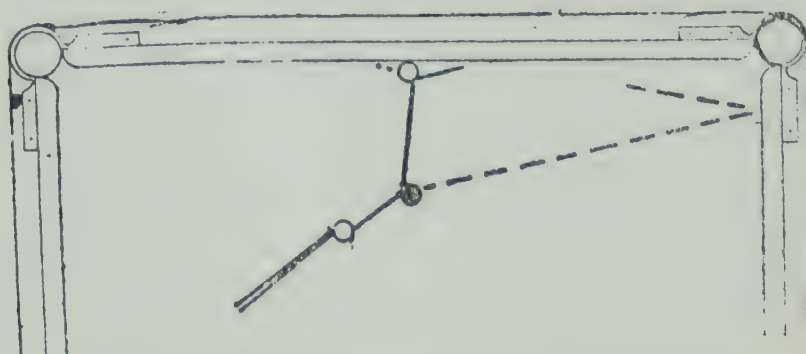


FIG. 188.—Run-through cannon, using left "side," catching object-white on its further side to dodge the "cover."

As will be noticed, the play upon both object-balls is different in every stroke. Experience counts for everything in the million-and-one details of the top-of-the-table break. The knowledge of the needs of the simple-looking positions is even more necessary than the proper

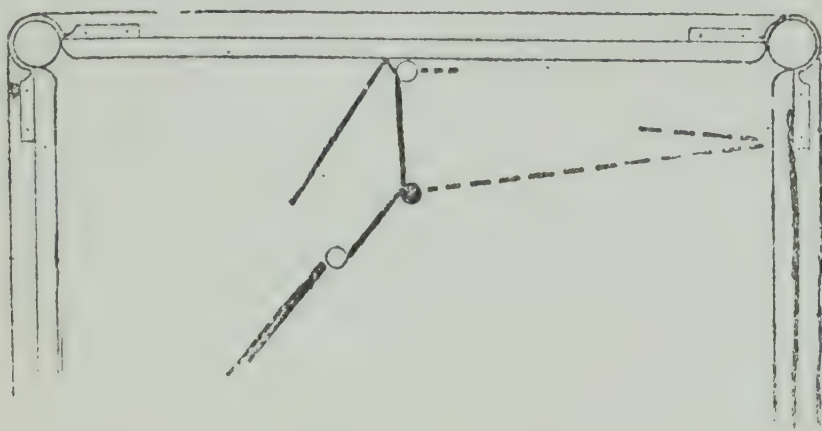


FIG. 189.—Thin shot on both object-balls, using a little left "side."

handling of them. Without it the most proficient stroke-player will be lost in its widening folds. So much depends upon taking the second object-ball on a given point of its circumference, thinly, fully, on its left side or right side as the after-position demands. Seldom is it

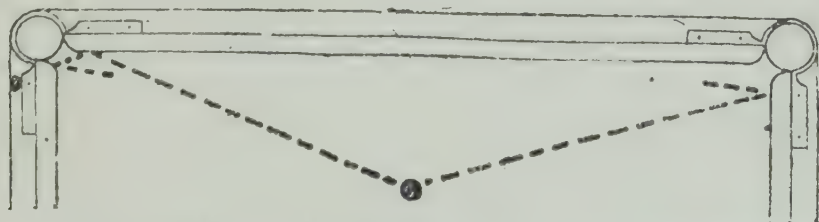


FIG. 190.—Action of the red ball when played on to the top and side cushion.

that one cannon is like another ; then, too, the first object-ball has to be as precisely attended to as has its partner. Next the disposition of your own ball, the cue-ball, has to be studied and administered to. In plain language, you are trying to control the running of the three balls. When one reflects how difficult a matter it

is to accurately gauge the pace and direction of one's own ball, let alone that of the other two—and always, or almost always, by delicate stroke play—some notion of what the top-of-the-table game asks for may be gleaned. I compare it to close cannon play, where the object-balls must be struck just so, and in no other way, or they will close you out of your “break” promptly and decisively. Have a turn at some close cannons, in the way that you have seen some of the professionals, and find out how one misjudged shot upsets all your calculations. It is so with these top-of-the-table breaks.

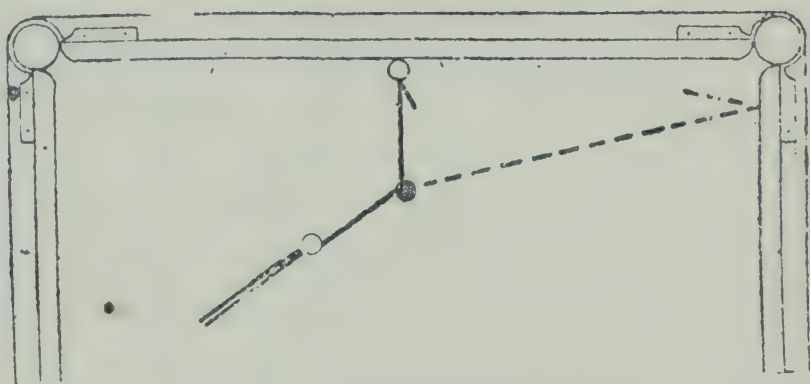


FIG. 191.—Plain half-ball stroke.

Do the right thing, and the sequence of your scoring is easy. But make a mistake, and you will be surprised at the troubles and trials that suddenly spring upon you.

The course of the red ball is a point for special study in these variations. Sent on to the side cushion, it cannot get far away from the pocket, and, even if you do put too much power in your stroke, the worst you will do is to bring it back near the two white balls. But, of course, this is not the idea of the play at all. Cannons must be utilized as mediums for the recurring winning hazard, not in consecutive array. The more gentle your “touch” and the more delicate your treatment of the

cannons that I show, the longer sustained will be your hold of the alternate hazard and cannon game. When the red is sent on to the top cushion, as it must be in the fullish contact right "side" strokes, care must be taken to see that it is retained near the pocket by the help of the pocket "shoulders," in this way :

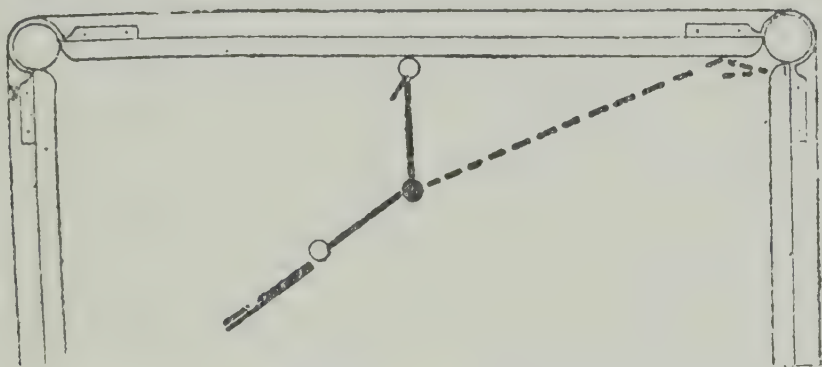


FIG. 192.—Run-through with right "side," dropping full on object-white.

Driven close up to the pocket, the coloured ball goes from the top cushion on to the further or side cushion "shoulder." It is driven back on the top cushion "shoulder" to stop right in the mouth of the pocket. If the top cushion receives the ball too quickly on its departure from the billiard spot, it will find its way on

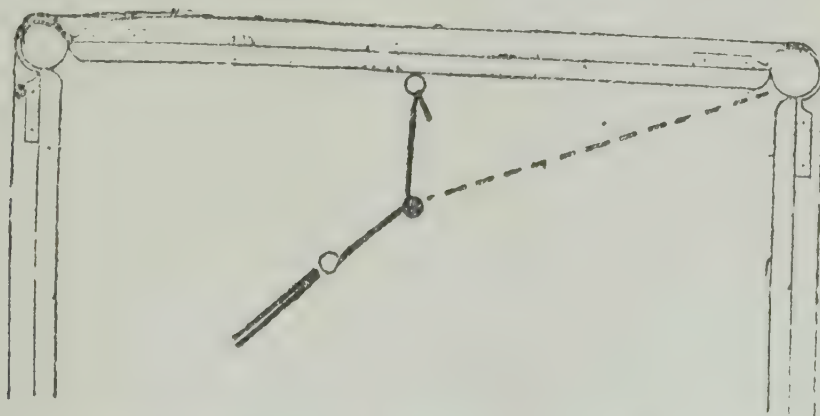


FIG. 193.—Unintentional putting down of the red ball and the difficult after "leave."

to the side cushion in all probability, leaving no winning hazard and very likely a most awkward "screw" losing

one. Worst of any, however, is the unintentional inserting of the red ball in the midst of top-of-the-table play. Nine times out of ten it will break up your game. If the "cover" is a thing to be dreaded, the unintentional disappearance of your red ball is very nearly as undesirable. All these little, but highly important, points have to be taken into very serious account.

Top-of-the-table play is one continuous attempt to avoid getting the balls in covering line. It is as important a detail, almost, as the actual scoring stroke, and is the predominant point to be studied in the "after-leave." You have to guide all three balls to such positions as will enable you to pursue the even tenour of a sequence of easy shots. The object-white must not shut you out from your inevitable winning hazard, nor must the "cover" interfere with the ready making of your indispensable canpons.

There are many and many positions which lend themselves more readily than others to a "cover." This can always be averted by the exercise of forethought and care. Knowledge of what, and what not, to do in these top-of-the-table passages counts for everything. You see the lurking danger, and are armed against it. The best player will make mistakes ; but it is something to be able to appreciate how they have arisen. Such things are lessons in themselves.

The screw-back stroke from the spotted red ball is always cropping up at the head of the table. A straight drive at the coloured ball, to send it into the further corner pocket, making the cue-ball recoil from it to somewhere about the point it has been fired from, is an important factor in top-of-the-table "breaks."

With the red ball thus sent in "off the spot," and the object-white lying handily by it, "the game" is now obviously to turn to the cannon. Everything, of course, depends upon the location of the cue-ball as to the nature of your next shot. This may be in any one of three ways. If the cue-ball has "come back" to stop nicely in line behind the returned red, the idea is to leave the three balls clustering midway along the top cushion for "nursery-cannon" play.

The "stun" stroke is used to bring about this result.

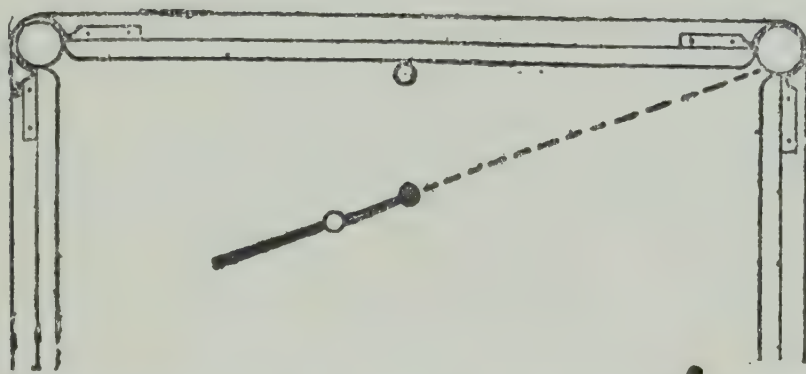


FIG. 194.—Recoil shot, putting the red ball in, and causing the cue-ball to return somewhere by its original position.

The cue-ball goes thickly on to the red ball and drops slowly plump on the object-white, pinning it securely to the cushion. Being driven on to the facing side cushion, the red ball rebounds over to the two whites, which form a wall as they lie side by side on the cushion behind the billiard spot. They effectually bar its progress, and by the gentle character of the stroke—it only requires a very delicate handling—the three balls are together. A "cover" may arise, but the odds are tremendously against it.

If the cue-ball does not run back in a direct line behind the red following the first-mentioned "screw-back" winning hazard, and stops a little above it, another

pretty "stun" stroke is employed. This leads to a more open game than that coming in the train of the shot

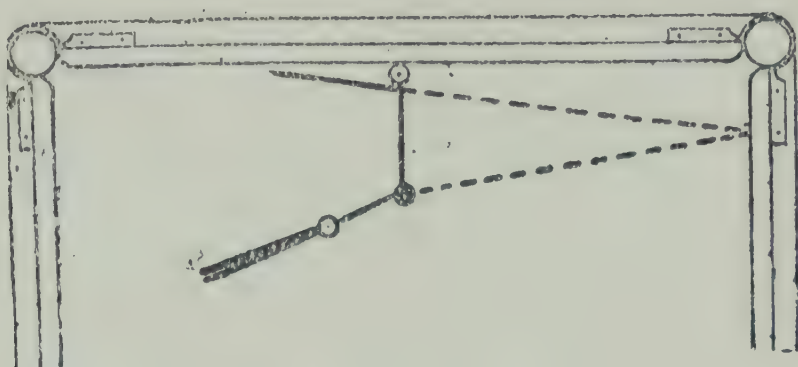


FIG. 195.—The wall formed by the two white balls, which blocks the path of the red ball.

shown on Fig. 195. Now the red is doubled across the table, and kept clear of the two white balls, thus:

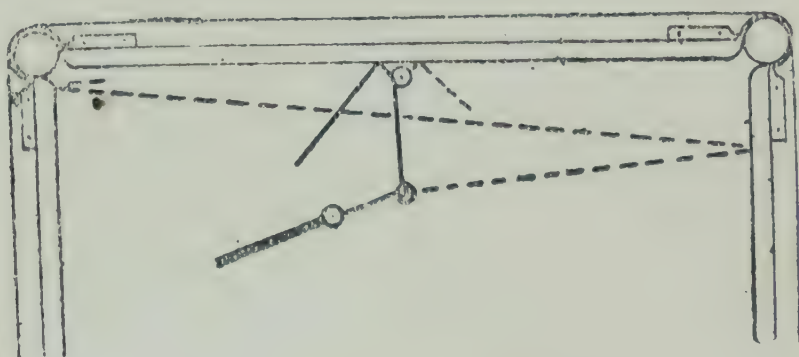


FIG. 196.—Doubling the red across the table to stop by a corner pocket.

Instead of dropping full on the object-white, you play to catch it about half-ball on the side nearest you. You don't want to stop the red on this occasion, so you avoid making the "ivory wall" which was the feature of the Fig. 195 shot. The extra time occupied by the cue-ball in meeting the object-white and being turned on to the cushion and from it again, permits—or should permit—of the red passing unmolested to its destination, over

the left corner pocket. The less pace you can get on the cue-ball the better, so long as you cause the red to reach its appointed place ; for there will be less fear of the latter "kissing" the cue-ball, a circumstance which usually means a dislocation of your position, if not of your "break."

To show some of the things which may and do happen in the connection of the shots depicted on Figs. 195 and 196, may not be amiss nor out of place. They will, I venture to think, further drive home my argument. Take the Fig. 195 "nursery-cannon leave." If you fail to drop full on the object-white you may break up your game at once. The cue-ball is moving about instead of standing still. It is almost certain to run up against the oncoming red. The force of the double impact will split the two balls apart. If only the cue-ball ceases motion—as it

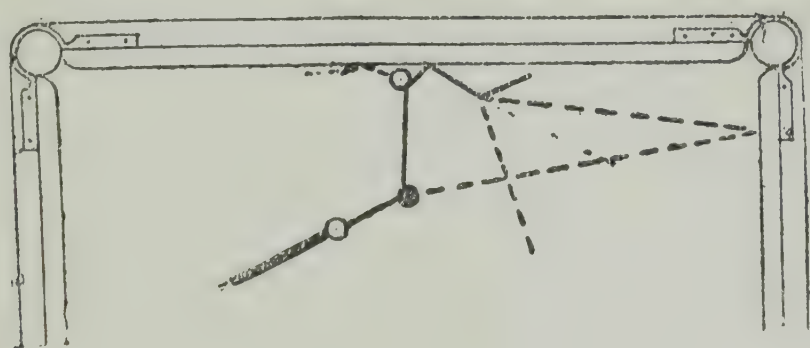


FIG. 197.—Trying to double the red across. It kisses the cue-ball, and splits up the top-of-the-table position.

should—before the arrival of the red upon the centre of operations, the disturbance will be appreciably slighter.

With regard to the "doubling-across-the-table" stroke of Fig. 196, let it at once be said that this is a very "tricky" one to deal with. If the red meets either of the whites you will generally find a most awkward position

springing up. The mishap mostly comes from the cue-ball making the cannon too thickly—that is, falling too fully on the object-white. The red catches the lower half of the cue-ball, and is thrown down the table, leaving the white balls in unpromising companionship along the top cushion.

On Fig. 199 will be seen a simple-looking arrangement of the balls. It does not want a genius to discern that with the lower white ball as the player's ball the cannon and "winner" to follow is the order of procedure. You cannot make the cannon half-ball, as the object-balls are

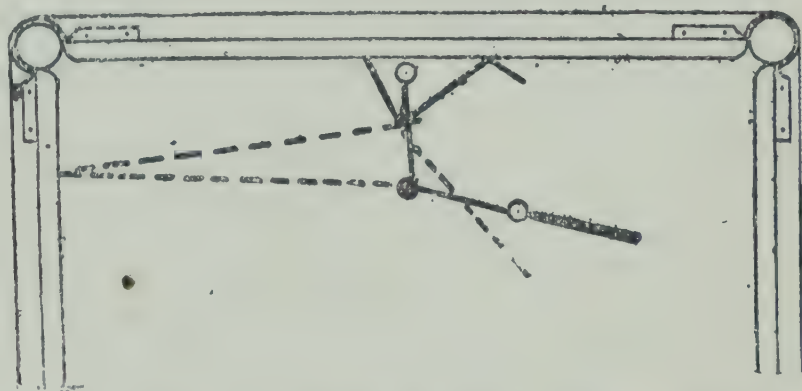


FIG. 198.—Another failure to double the red ; again it is thrown out of play.

not open enough to you. But you can make it by a thinnish shot—that is, if you feel so inclined. I have seen this particular stroke played times out of number by good amateurs in that way. They have generally wondered why the result is the dreaded "cover."

As may be gleaned from the lines (continuous for the cue-ball and dotted for the object-balls) extending from the balls, a "cover" has been effected. So little pace has to be used to cut the red by the corner pocket, that after its second contact with the object-white (to make the cannon) the cue-ball falls exhausted on the cushion after having pushed the object-white between it and the red

ball—result, a dead “cover,” and one which generally happens when the cannon is thus played direct.

The correct way to play this stroke is to avoid making the cannon by a direct shot. Instead of taking the red

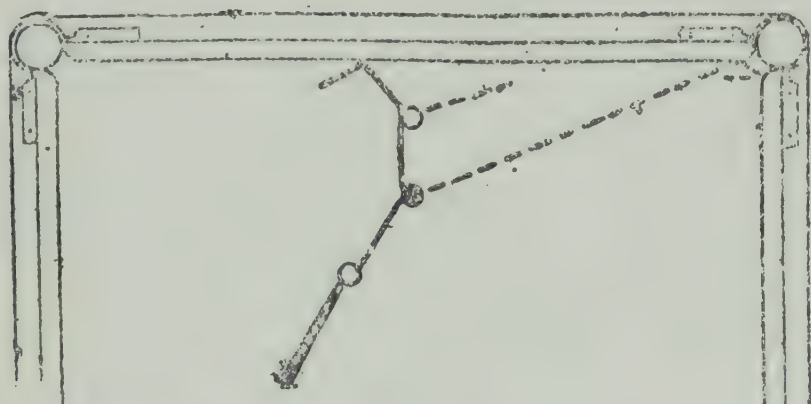


FIG. 199.—Incorrectly played cannon, which causes the object-white to mask the red.

thinly, play for a half-ball contact and use some right “side” to bring your ball back from the top cushion on to the object-white in this way :—

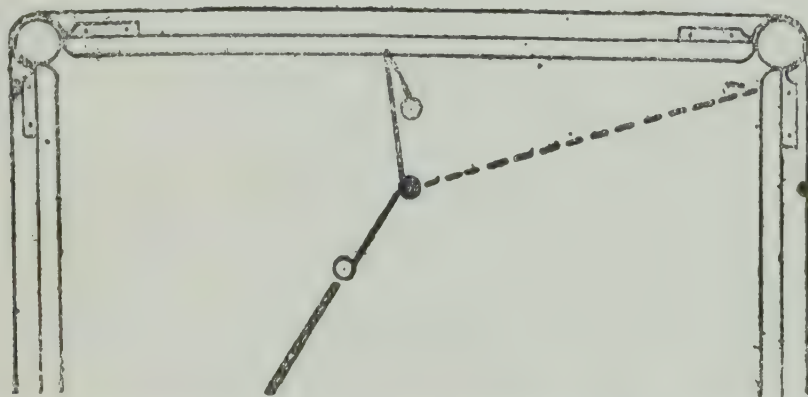


FIG. 200.—The correct manner of playing the cannon (by the cushion) shown on Fig. 199. The cue-ball now has a clear passage to the red.

Your ball comes up behind the object-white, sending the latter nearer the billiard spot, and leaving an open passage for itself to the red. The “cover” is avoided by the simplest of means.

Having furnished a lengthy series of examples of

the leading position in the top-of-the-table game—that is, when the object-white ball lies behind the spotted red on or close by the top cushion—which I think has specified the idea of the play fairly plainly, I now turn to the second best position. This, as I pointed out earlier on, occurs when the object-white lies below the billiard spot, and not as in the best position between the latter landmark and the top cushion. The advantage that the leading position claims arises from the better hold the player can retain upon the object-white. It finds the top cushion a decided impediment to its leaving the neighbourhood of the billiard spot, as I have repeatedly shown. The defect in the second position lies in the opposite tendency of the object-white, for, lying in the open field of play, every cannon, no matter how gently it may be played, knocks it further and further away from the red ball. There is now no cushion behind to hold it. It is pretty play, prettier, probably, than that induced by the leading position, and more exacting. For now the most delicate touches mark the making of the all-needed cannon, so as to disturb the object-white as little as possible. Then, too, when it has drifted a trifle out of hand, its recovery, or attempted recovery, into a top-of-the-table position is most interesting and instructive.

A look at Fig. 201 will convey the idea of the second position to the full. As compared with the working and the disposition of the balls in the leading or best top-of-the-table position, the cue-ball and the object-white change places. Now it is the former that seeks for, and maintains, a situation above the red ball, as it takes its stand for favourable command of the intervening cannons.

The object-white, on the other hand, now lies below the red, occupying the field which in the other top-of-the-table arrangement was within the monopoly area of the cue-ball. Thus the two games bear little resemblance to each other in the character of the manipulation of the individual strokes, although, of course, the principle of the scoring is practically identical in both cases—the ever-recurring winning hazards, to fit in with which are the delicately-played “position” cannons.

Having said so much of the general nature of the play that arises in this second top-of-the-table position, we will go through a course of its workings, starting with

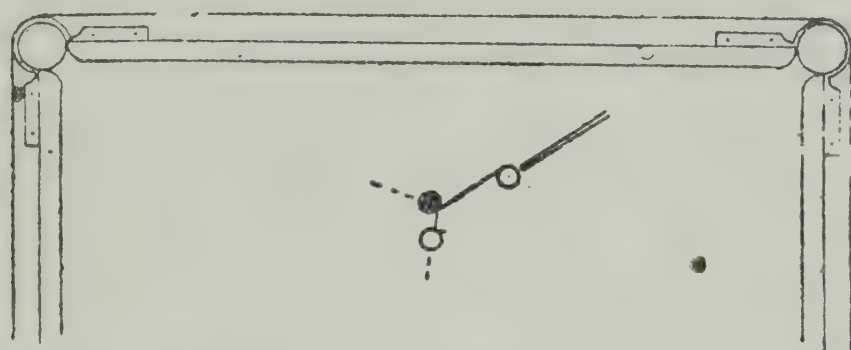


FIG. 201.—Second-best top-of-the-table position. Stroke—a cannon placing the red ball for a winning hazard.

the balls placed as on Fig. 201, which gives the most favourable position in this connection. The opening stroke is a thin, gentle cannon, pushing the red ball in a line with the further corner pocket, and dropping so stealthily on the object-white as to barely move it one ball's distance down the table. It will at once be seen that there is now no steering the coloured ball close by the corner pockets, as in the leading position play. The presence of the object-white in the open field of operations prevents this. You have now to depend on your winning hazards by making the red ball travel a longer

distance, as you must play the cannons at the most delicate "strength" so as not to knock the object-white further away from the billiard spot than you can possibly help. But as the cue-ball is now necessarily always closer to the red, a fair counterbalance is thus gained.

Having played the thin, delicate cannon, as needed by the position on Fig. 201, we find the balls "left" plainly suggesting the red winner we have tried to "leave," with a plain cannon staring us in the face to follow on with. It is about a three-quarter-ball hazard. You may either "screw back" after this fashion (Fig. 202), taking the

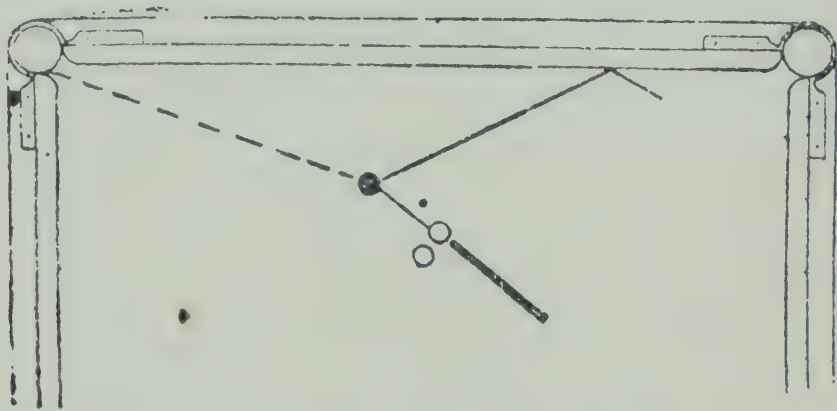


FIG. 202.—Putting in the red ball, "screwing" cue-ball into position for the cannon.

cue-ball back to that side of the table the "break" was commenced from, or gain position for the cannon or a winning hazard by sending it ahead from the red on to the top cushion, which will direct it into desirable quarters. Played with a bit of left "side" and a slow stroke (Fig. 203) will convey the course of the balls, which "leaves" the cannon as simple a one as could be wished for. A little more pace and a second winning hazard would be "left."

As I have played the shot, I have, in effect, the same cannon as that on Fig. 195, only that the cue-ball operates

from the other side. A repetition of the former cannon (*vide* Fig. 204)—a thin, gently played one—pushes the object-white about another ball's distance down the table, the red is again shaped up for a simple winning hazard,

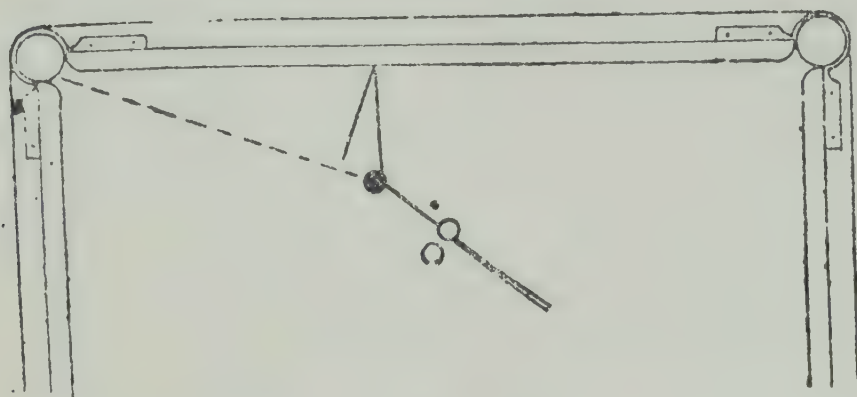


FIG. 203.—Illustrating the forward run of the cue-ball instead of the “screw-back” used on Fig. 202.

and everything runs smoothly. Again there is an optional “screw-back” or forward stroke off the top cushion to place the cue-ball, after its mission on the red, in touch with the cannon or a spot hazard. So much more

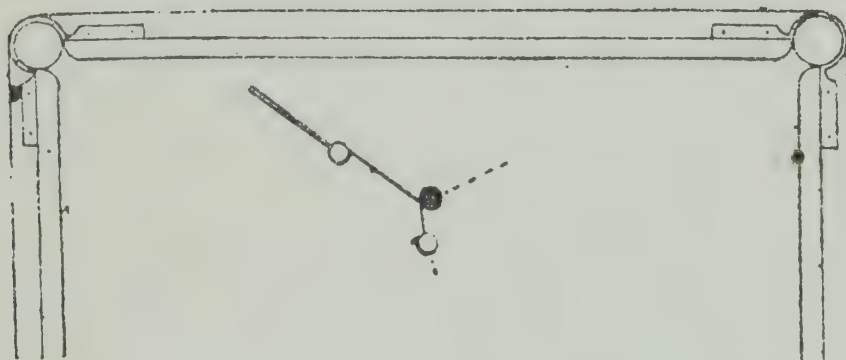


FIG. 204.—Another cannon placing the red ball for the winning hazard.

latitude for easy position is given by keeping the cue-ball above the billiard spot that I repeat the Fig. 203 stroke. The red goes in, and the cue-ball stops somewhere half-way in between the top cushion and the billiard spot for an easy cannon.

Although the object-white has only been struck twice, it has moved a matter of some four or five inches away from the place it stood on at the beginning stroke. This, too, in despite of most delicate manipulation, for

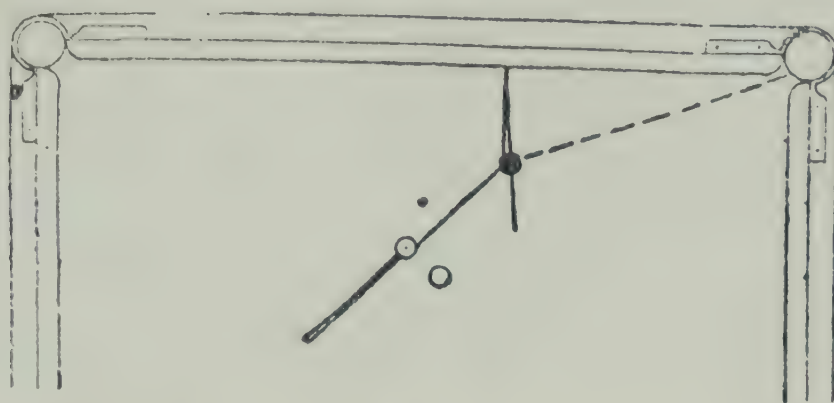


FIG. 205.—Winning hazard bringing the cue-ball into position for a second shot of the same kind on the now spotted red ball.

one can hardly hope to do better than confine its movement within the radius of a little over two inches—one ball's distance—at each successive cannon. There is, therefore, an appreciably increased gap existing between

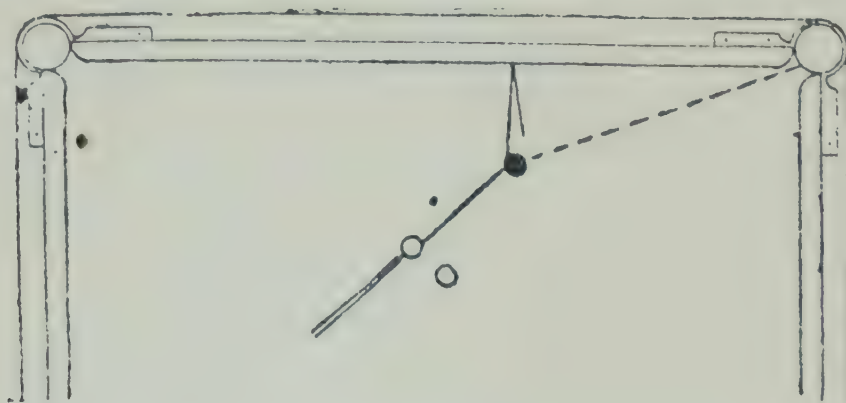


FIG. 206.—Winning hazard leaving the cannon.

the object-balls when the third cannon demands attention. The object-white is nearly a third of the way on to the pyramid spot. It means that you must exercise more care than ever in the treatment of the cannon, or

the top-of-the-table position will suffer dislocation. But, of course, the further the distance the cue-ball has to travel to make its cannon the less certain the "strength" and direction of the stroke are likely to be. In the instance under notice (see Fig. 207) the cannon—a plain half-ball one—is very well played. Perhaps a little too much pace, a very little, but, all the same, more than was intended, knocks the object-white several inches further down the table.

By now the object-white has pretty well reached the limit of its field away from the billiard spot. Another cannon on to it from the cue-ball's established cannon

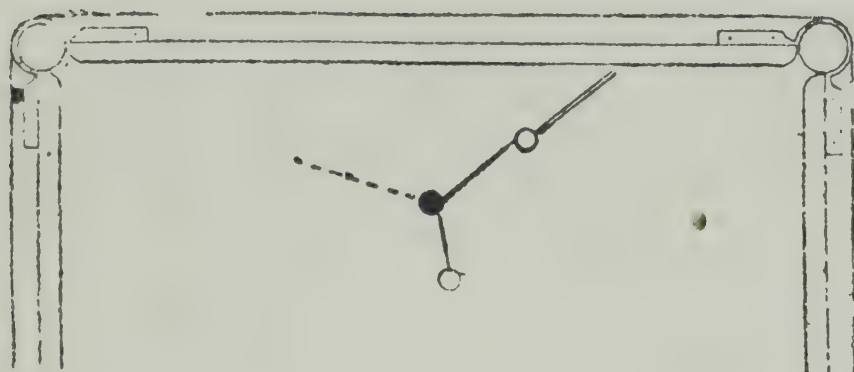


FIG. 207.—A slow "half-ball" cannon.

position would drive it more towards the middle of the table. A skilled player might even then redeem it, and drive it back by the billiard spot with a well-judged shot; still, it is not good policy to run the risk of letting it get away from your control. So, with "Caution" as our watchword, we now turn to an endeavour to get the object-white back by the spot. To do this the red winner has to be made with some force, giving the cue-ball a longish run off the two corner cushions, and causing it to get lower down the table, so as to command

the straying object-white. A judicious use of left "side," and a stroke somewhat above medium pace, on the lines of Fig. 208, will do the needful.

It is now imperative, with the object-white as the driven ball, that you bring, or try to bring, the three balls together for close cannon play on the top cushion, as a preliminary step to the regaining of a tangible top-of-the-table position. The necessary stroke (see Fig.

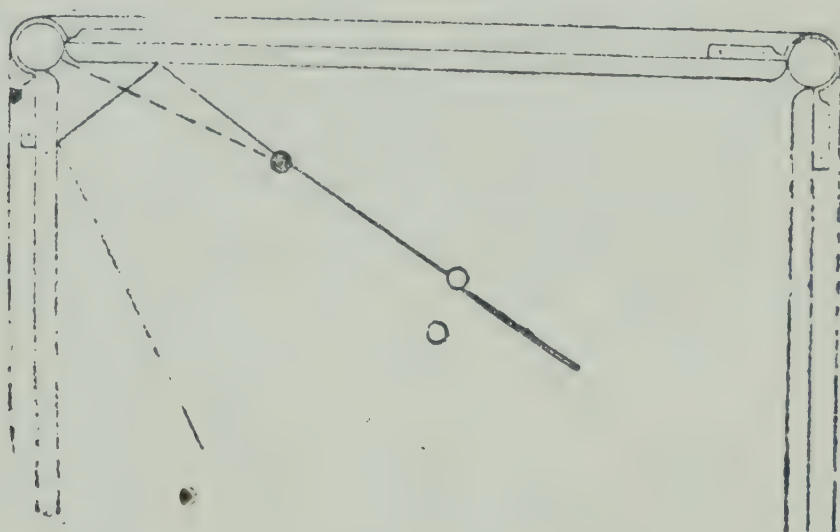


FIG. 208.—Potting the red in a corner, and sending the cue-ball down the table by means of a run-through "side" stroke off the corner cushions. The idea is to gather the object-white in by the billiard spot again.

209), or, rather, a variation of it, as the red was then the first-played ball, is a "stun." The object-white is taken thickly, and the red should be dropped fully upon. The red and cue-ball should block the path of the object-white, and the resultant "kiss" should give the desired close cannon "leave." This cannon, however, demands very precise handling, and is far from an easy affair in the way of the after position ; still, it has to be played.

One very important point in the connection of the top-of-the-table game is the guiding-line given to the cue-ball as it "puts down the red" by the location of

the object-white. I must repeat that the idea of the play is to make two winning hazards to one cannon. But, for security's sake, one must not depend upon the

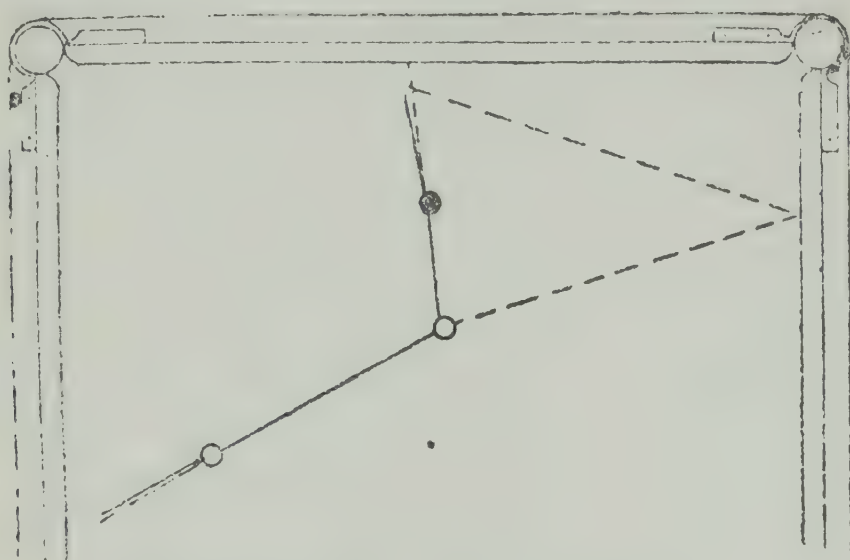


FIG. 209.—The "gathering" cannon.

"winner" alone. Keep the cannon "on" as well whenever possible. Say that you have the balls in the position given on Fig. 210, the red ball overhanging the corner pocket, with the object-white lying near the

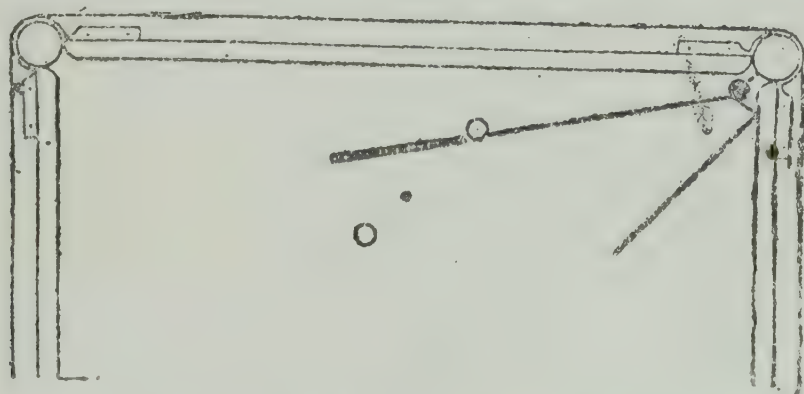


FIG. 210.—A slow "winner," using right "side" to leave the cannon cue-ball, kept to opposite side of table from object-white.

billiard spot. Of course, you drop the red in—that much is obvious to the poorest player. To bring the cue-ball into position for a gentle cannon off the red as it comes up on the spot, after being pocketed, is also

pretty plain procedure. A bit of right "side," getting well hold of the red at gentle pace, and there need be little fear of a mistake, for there is so much room wherefrom the cannon is easily accessible. So much for that stroke for the moment.

Now we will turn to Fig. 211. Here we have a similar sort of position to that of Fig. 210. The red ball occupies the same place, as does the cue-ball. The only alteration lies in the disposition of the object-white, which now stands on the same side of the table as the other balls. It is a minor circumstance, seemingly. How vastly it



FIG. 211.—Medium pace, thin, left "side" "winner," causing cue-ball to cross the table, again leaving object-white on the other side of the billiard spot.

alters the character of your stroke I will endeavour to show. Instead of putting the red ball in, as you previously did, with a gentle, fullish, right "side" stroke, it now devolves upon you to "cut" it in, using strong left "side." The cue-ball has to cross to the other side of the table in the manner illustrated on the figure. Play the stroke at good medium pace, allowing for the "check side," that is, the left "side," taking a lot of speed out of your ball as it strikes the cushions.

These two strokes (Figs. 210 and 211) are dictated by method—that all-important factor in making "breaks." You will, doubtless, have noticed that the two white balls

were in each instance kept to opposite sides of the table. When the object-white was to the right of the billiard-spot the cue-ball was directed to a point on the left side of it, and *vice versa*. That is the true principle of the play, and may be accepted as an invariable rule so long as the object-white is close to the billiard-spot, either above or below it. This rule only enforces the old-standing one of "Keep the balls in front of you." By planting the cue-ball on the opposite half of the table to that occupied by the object-white the two object-balls must be in front of it. Another order of things prevails when the object-white gets somewhat out of touch with the billiard-spot. Your game is to drive it back by the latter landmark again. To bring this about you have now to discard your "opposite side of the table" tactics. In this case your policy must be changed. You have to send the cue-ball to herd the straying object-white in again. Then it will usually be found desirable to keep both balls to the same side of the table.

Apart from the lesson one may gain from these two strokes in the matter of the working of the cue-ball to adopt the most favourable places for its control of the object-ones, there is something to be learnt of the various ways the top-of-the-table player has to insert the red ball. With the latter lying in the jaws of the pocket, as in the instances of Figs. 210 and 211, it can be put in by different degrees of contact—very thin, medium, or full. The player takes advantage of the size of the pocket, and the fact of the red ball being so near it, to make the winning hazard in the way that suits him best. A poor player puts a ball down by one set stroke, the

good one by at least three different ones. This may be said to apply to all strokes on the billiard table. Figs. 210 and 211 show a fullish and thin stroke on the same ball, in exactly the same position by a pocket, and which both effectually drop it in, at the same time permitting the cue-ball to take two widely different courses. Winning hazards, as some may not know, can be played by diverse strokes, just as cannons and losing hazards are. But the prudent player does not attempt too much in this direction unless he has the object-ball right over a pocket.

Some of the most useful strokes for reopening easy command over the balls in these top-of-the-table passages are the zigzag, or "squeeze-through," shots. Few amateurs appear to have any conception of the transformation they can work on an apparently complicated position. Say that you have already put the red in once, and the cue-ball is situated in a line midway between the two object-balls, as on Fig. 212. The ordinary ball-to-ball cannon played to leave the red over the corner pocket will knock the object-white so far away from the billiard-spot as to put an end to your top-of-the-table "break." The experts of the game have devised and perfected a better shot than that, though—the zigzag, or "squeeze-through." There is just room for a ball to pass through the two object-ones, and the player takes advantage of the fact to play the thinnest of thin, and most delicate of delicate, cannons from the white ball. His idea is to get on the further side of the red and to shift the balls the smallest possible distance in doing so. Grazing the object-white, the cue-ball passes between the target balls. The gentle

touch it has made with the object-white is sufficient to deflect it from the straight line, and it is thrown slightly over on to the red. Touching this very thinly, it passes out to the other side in a direction influenced by the

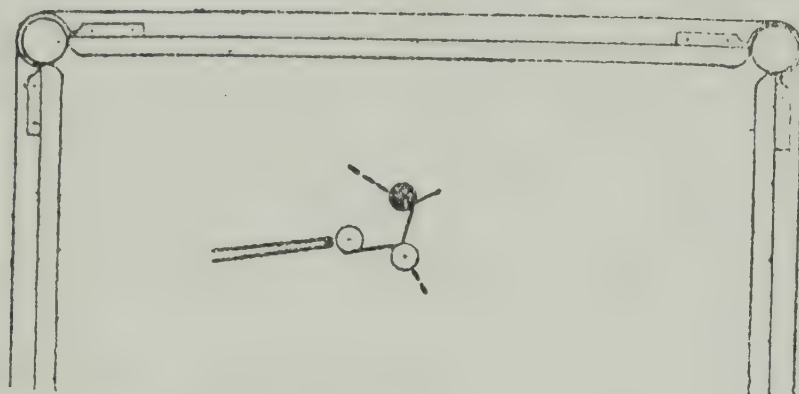


FIG. 212.—The gentle "zigzag," or "squeeze-through," cannon.

second contact, and which helps to preserve its zigzag course. The net result of the stroke is the "leave" depicted on Fig. 212—as good an one as could be wished for—showing an almost direct winning hazard, and the object-white still most favourably placed. This zigzag

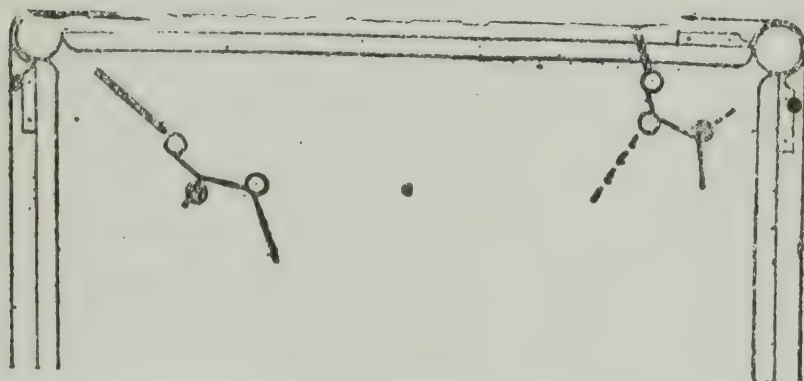


FIG. 213.—Further "zigzag," or "squeeze-through," cannon examples.

stroke is applicable to many positions (further examples may be seen on Fig. 213) and may be played at varying paces, according to the exigencies of your after-leave. It is not confined alone to such narrow openings between

the balls as the Fig. 212 stroke depicts. There may be a wider gap existing from object-ball to object-ball, and it may still be used. The deft introduction of "side" will help in such variations of the original stroke, as will the angle at which the cue-ball is shot from. The great essential to bear in mind is the necessity that the cue-ball must come out nicely behind the second object-ball, not in front of it, nor on the side of it, but directly behind it, as gauged by the point from where you have played. Note the run of the cue-ball on each of the figures.

Similar strokes are the annexed :

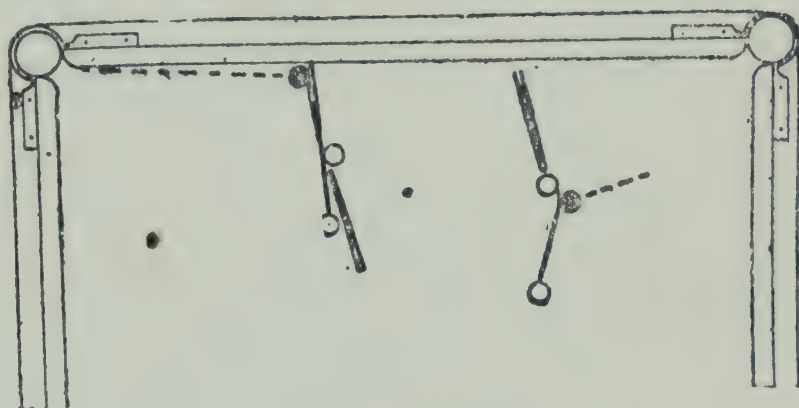


FIG. 214.—Cannons placing the red ball in position for the necessary winning hazard.

In both cases the cue-ball guides the red by a thin, gentle stroke over a pocket, at the same time making a cannon. They represent very common positions in connection with the top-of-the-table game. Of course, the most difficult cannon of the two is that played from the coloured ball lying by the end cushion. On the figure a plain, thin shot is shown. It is, however, only one form of this useful cannon. It shapes up respectively for half-ball, gentle "screws," and "side" play. Touch, and a

nice knowledge of the angle thrown by the cushions, are most essential in all these cushion cannons.

On the other hand, the direct "thin" cannon the other stroke illustrates is simplicity itself, a slow, light touching of the red moving it little from its position, and, dropping on to the object-white, one may "leave" a cannon or winning hazard "on."

Of all the requirements of the top-of-the-table play nothing is so eminently useful in the matter of retention of position as the "screw-back" or "recoil" stroke. In the old days, when the "spot stroke" held its eventually monotonous sway, it was the objective of each and all of the illustrious band of players who made such truly wonderful "breaks." Dead in line they would get behind the spotted red ball, to stay there for frequently sixty, seventy, eighty, and occasionally a hundred consecutive strokes of the straight "screw-back" kind. It was one continuous "slapping in" of the red ball, with the cue-ball recoiling back to its original position, stroke after stroke, in truly astonishingly accurate style.

Just as the "screw-back" was a distinguished factor in the spot stroke, so it figures in the up-to-date version of that form of play—the top-of-the-table game. It is mainly seen to exercise its functions when the red ball is on the spot, as in the olden time. Spectators at the professional billiard entertainments often suffer a momentary pang of surprise when, as they think, the plainest of plain cannons has been missed. The object-white stands closely by the spotted red, a matter of two or three inches apart, with the cue-ball a foot or so away nicely behind the spot. Those not too well conversant with the workings of the top-of-the-table game

can only see the cannon on, and as the player's ball hits the red and runs back again, they rub their eyes for one fleeting fraction of a second, till they see the coloured ball entering the further corner pocket. The screw-back has been put into operation with the best possible results to the player's "position" requirements.

If it is serviceable in maintaining a control over the balls when you have them under your command, the "screw-back" is of equal value in regaining lost "position." Of such examples the strokes on Figs. 215 and 216 are distinctly instructive. On Fig. 215 the thin cannon on the right side of the table shows where the player has managed to get into a complication when endeavouring to obtain a hold of, or during the progress of a spell of, the top-of-the-table game. It is true that he has the option of opening out the object-white for a "loser" in the corner pocket, and that, also, he may still keep the balls in front of him by a nicely judged contact with the second object-ball—the red. But, playing the top-of-the-table game, as we are supposed to be doing, there is a straight-away road back to the simplest form of the play. To be playing cannons in mid-field more than you can possibly help demands such a mastery of the balls as few possess. It is infinitely a wiser policy for any one short of championship attainments to put more faith in the security of the pockets, and always to try to work up to them. So with the kind of stroke I exemplify coming across your path, a slow, thin cannon, dropping full on your second object-ball so as to keep it directly in front of the cue-ball, will afford you the means of renewing acquaintance with your lost top-of-the-table position. You plant the cue-ball in between the two

object-ones, as it were, with your first cannon. Your

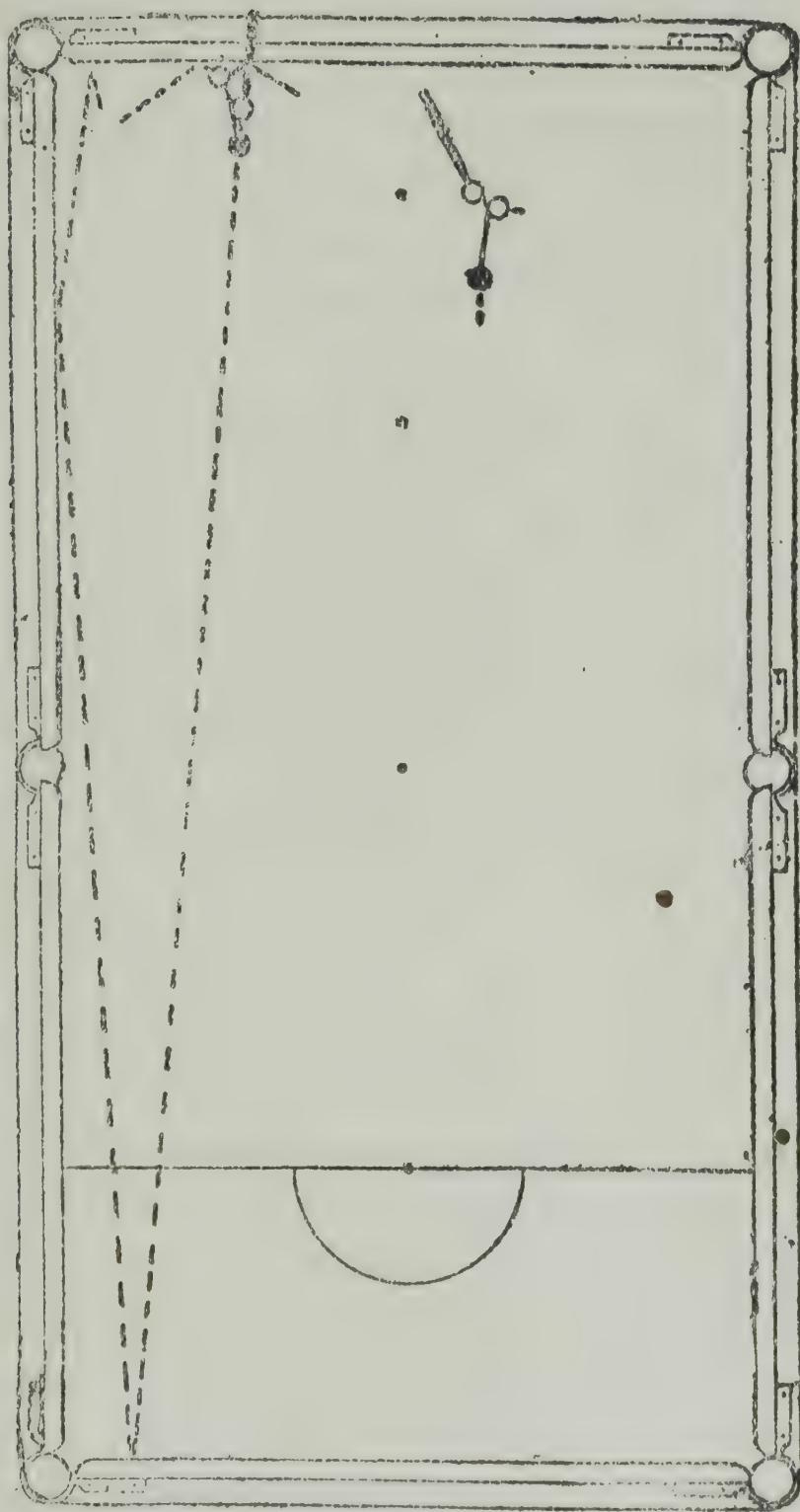


FIG. 215.—Getting into position again by means of forming the second object-ball up for a “screw-back” cannon. The preliminary and the actual “screw-back” strokes are shown.

second one, a “screw-back” from what was your second

object-ball, should drive the latter to and back from the baulk-end cushion, while retaining the ball which you cannon upon by the head of the table. This second stroke is also shown on Fig. 215. Getting the red anywhere around the corner of the table—the strength of the stroke is not difficult to gauge, though, of course, it varies on almost every table—you again stand in command of matters.

In the closer top-of-the-table work, where the balls are always moving between the two top pockets, the “screw-back” enters largely and usefully into the play.

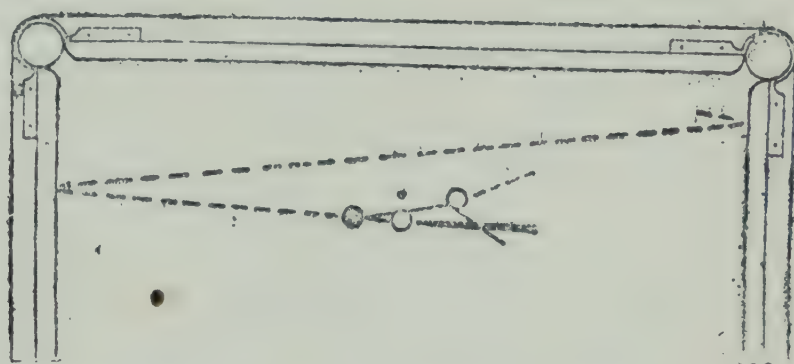


FIG. 216.—“Screw-back” cannon driving first object-ball across the table to recover position near the spot.

Often enough the making of the winning hazard would mean the cue-ball getting out of touch with the other two. A specimen of such a position can be seen on Fig. 216. To put in the red the cue-ball must of necessity leave the top-of-the-table district. Of course, it could be sent around the board and so back by a high-speed stroke. Still, this would only go to intensify the already none-too-easy “winner.” So, sticking to the principle of keeping the game as easy as circumstances permit of your doing, you “screw-back” for the cannon, with the idea of “doubling” the red across the table to “leave”

it over the left corner pocket, as the diagram goes to show.

When, earlier or later, one gets into difficulties at the top-of-the-table game, there is a stroke by means of which one may save the situation. This is known as the "cross" losing hazard. The cue-ball gently drops in the red, and stays by one or other of the corner pockets. When the red comes up on the billiard-spot, a losing hazard is made from it into the opposite corner pocket. In the midst of a top-of-the-table or losing-hazard "break" this stroke is bound to play a prominent

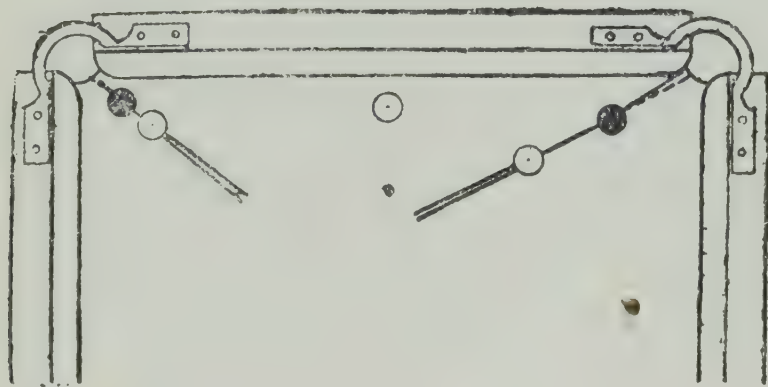


FIG. 217.—Putting the red in, leaving the cue-ball in position for the cross losing hazard.

part ; for every time it is played it drives the red ball over a middle pocket. The top-of-the-table player may at once put it down, and thus gain his favourite position, or shape up the "drop" cannon with a losing hazard. The player who selects the losing-hazard style of scoring is at once put into direct communication with his favourite pockets—the middle ones.

It is the game to get away from the top of the table when it is a very questionable point whether one can get the cue-ball into nice position "behind" the spotted red, or below the two object-balls for the cannon. On Fig. 217

there will be seen two such examples. Either of them

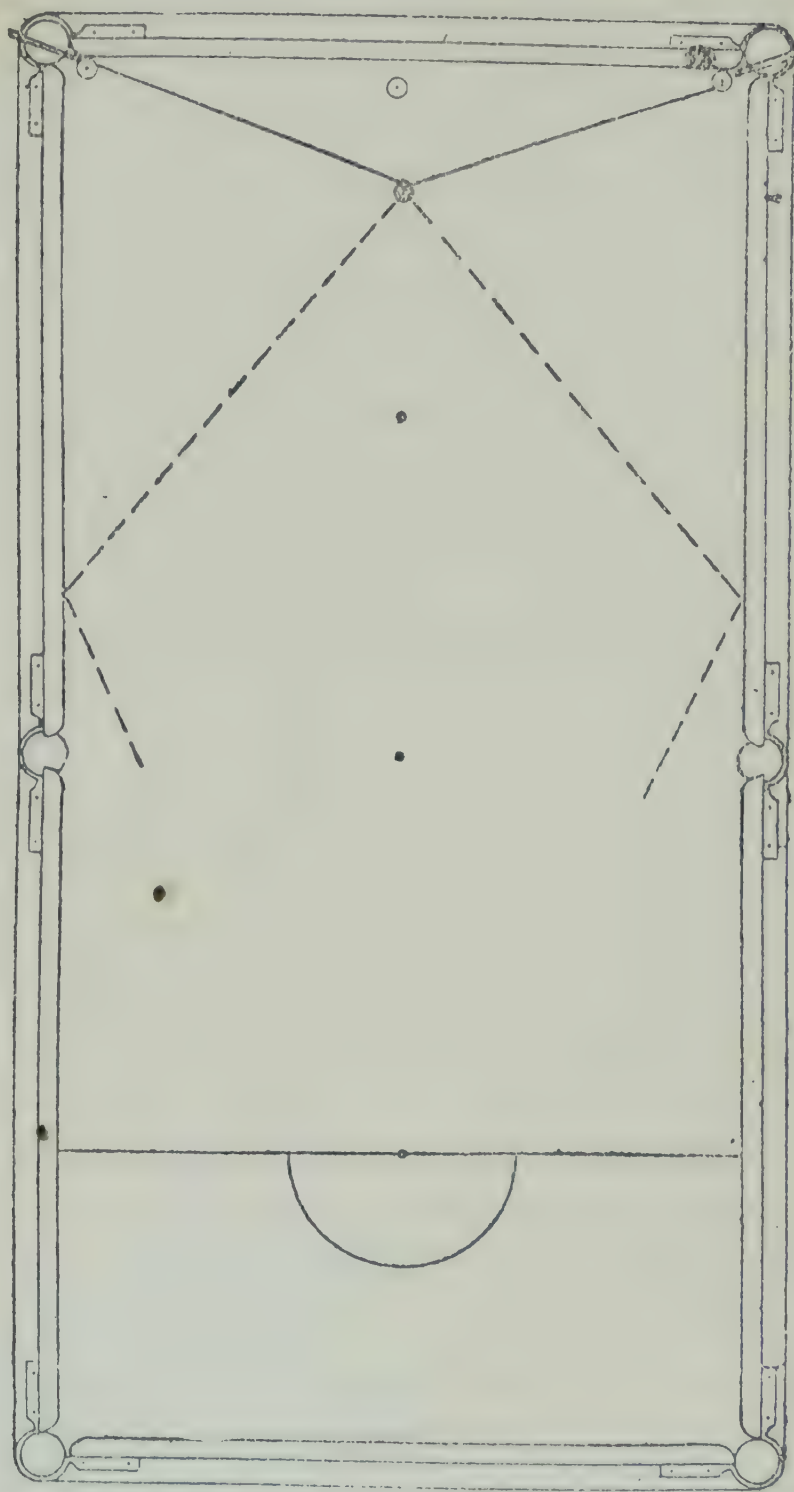


FIG. 218.—Directing the red over the middle pockets by means of the cross losing hazard.

shows the cue-ball almost directly in line behind the red ball's centre and the middle pocket. To get the

cue-ball into position for a winning hazard on the red (when placed on the spot) would require in each case a very well-judged "screw-back" stroke. The stopping-place of the cue-ball would be so uncertain that it is a far sounder game to leave the cue-ball standing by the pocket as it gently drops in the red. You then make a "half-ball" medium pace losing hazard into the opposite corner pocket off the red ball, which is directed over the middle pocket (see Fig. 218). You will leave it nicely placed for a winning hazard or for a losing hazard. It is for you then to judge whether it is easiest and best to put in the red and run the cue-ball up by the spot (as per the right middle pocket stroke on Fig. 219), or make the losing hazard to leave the "drop" cannon (as per the left middle pocket stroke on Fig. 219).

You often get the cue-ball nicely in line behind the red for a winning hazard, with the object-white tantalizingly near the spot. But, unless you "screw" your ball back, you won't "leave" anything. And as these kind of strokes nearly always ask something big of you—ask you to be at your best every time you play them, for they want such extremely nice handling—it is safer to let the cue-ball follow on after the red as you make the winning hazard and stop outside the pocket to leave the "cross loser." This is the safety-valve of the top-of-the-table game, and you let it off just when you feel the arrangement is about to burst.

The purpose and execution of the "cross losing hazard" is fully explained in Chapter II. (Vol. I.). The "natural, half-ball" angle from the spotted red ball to the corner pockets is to be found from a line drawn out of the centre of the latter to the billiard-spot.

only to pass to the other side of the table to be in position.

It is quite a different matter when the red ball and

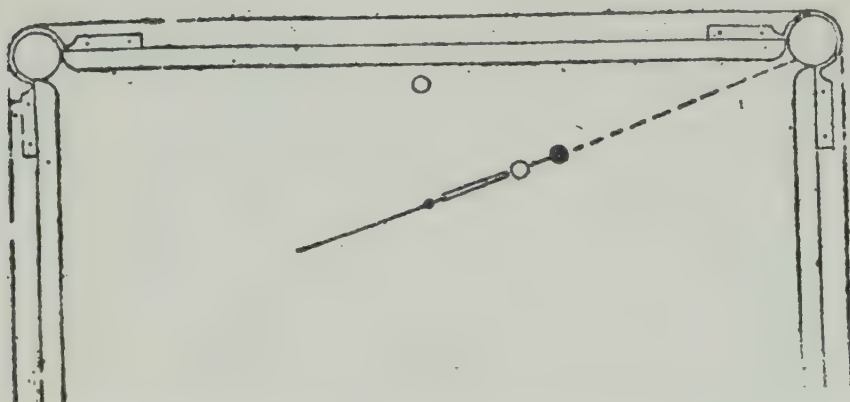


FIG. 220.—Screwing back from the red, putting the latter in, and leaving a top-of-the-table cannon.

cue-ball are down in the corner of the table, as shown on Fig. 221. To “screw-back” when putting in the coloured ball (as on Fig. 220) would not be sound play. The stroke would require very nice treatment to get the cue-ball into good position on either side of the billiard-

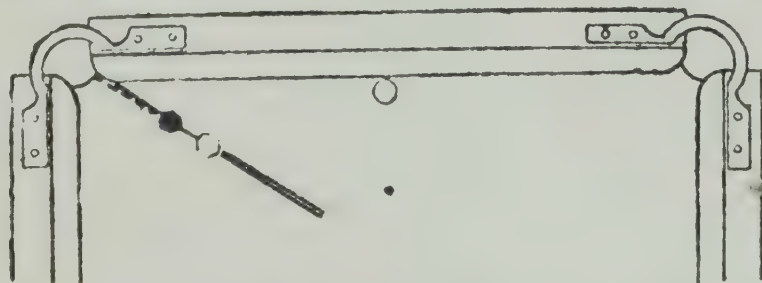


FIG. 221.—Dropping the red gently in, and following it up to leave the “cross loser.”

spot. It is much more simple and safe to just drop the red ball in, and follow on with the cue-ball to leave the “cross losing hazard.”

Fig. 222 provides a variation of the foregoing shot. The two balls are now widely apart, though still in a dead straight line, one behind the other, with the middle of the

pocket. Again it is better to try and place the cue-ball for the "cross losing hazard" than to attempt to get in position for the cannon. Drive the red ball in with a "stab" shot, which should result in the cue-ball occupy-

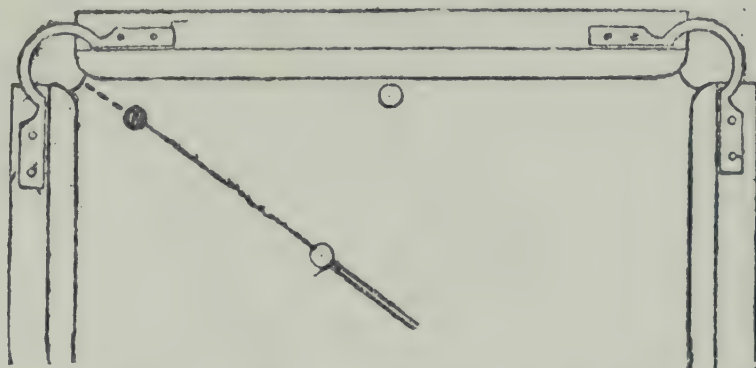


FIG. 222.—"Stabbing" the red in, bringing the cue-ball to a full stop, and in position for the "cross losing hazard."

ing the spot that the former had stood on, and a nice angle for the "loser" to the opposite corner pocket.

As displaying the advantage of the "cross losing hazard" over any intricate stroke-play to keep up the sequence of the alternate cannon and winning hazard, I fancy Figs. 223 and 224 will furnish a useful object-



FIG. 223.—Dropping the red in slowly, leaving the cue-ball by the corner pocket for the "cross losing hazard."

lesson. On both figures the red ball and cue-ball are placed in exactly the same positions. Fig. 223 shows the red ball dropped in with the slowest of slow strokes, placing the cue-ball for the "cross losing hazard." The

sole point that the player has to regard in this stroke is the striking of the cue-ball (low down, of course, to give the least possible run to it), so that it barely carries more pace than will allow it to reach the red ball. The most gentle touch will put the latter in the pocket.

Fig. 224, however, displays the stroke as an accomplished player might (it is not of a certainty that he absolutely would) play it. If feeling in good touch he would, probably, endeavour to keep up at the top of the table as long as possible. In such circumstances he would, by using right "side," and hitting the red little

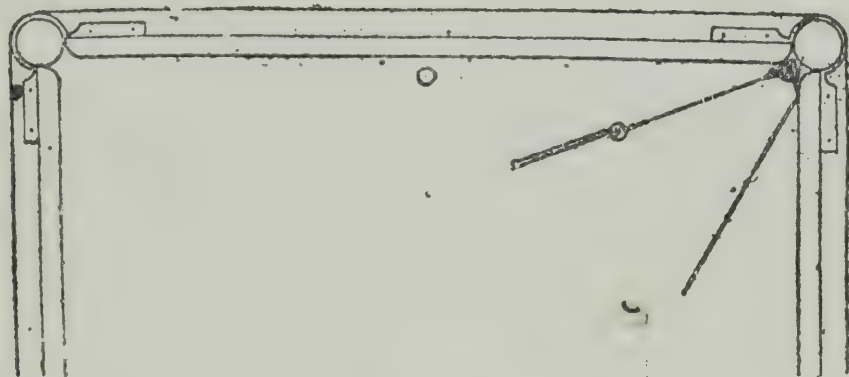


FIG. 224.—Putting the red in with a "side" stroke to place the cue-ball in position for the cannon.

more than half-ball, guide the cue-ball out from the cushions into position for the cannon. But whether he obtained a favourable position, or whether he put too much pace into his ball, and so sent it into the middle of the table (leaving the object-balls covered), the stroke cannot be considered anything like so sound as the play for the "cross losing hazard."

The most tantalizing thing about the "leaves" which asks for one's recourse to the "cross losing hazard" arise nine times out of ten when the object-white is in perfect position for the top-of-the-table game

—that is, on, or by, the top cushion directly behind the billiard-spot. This is so tempting to the inexperienced player that it prompts him to try and leave the cannon. The result generally is that he gets a “cover.” *If at all in doubt as to your ability to open up a connection with the cannon, do not forget that the invaluable “cross losing hazard” is there to help you out of trouble as you put down the red ball.*

In the “winning hazards” chapter (Vol. I.) there are several strokes shown giving the cue-ball positions for the “cross losing hazard.”

CHAPTER VII

THE BILLIARD-ROOM AND ITS CONTENTS

THE ROOM.

THE proper appointment of a billiard-room should be a simple matter. But I find that the very great majority of such rooms in private houses are by no means well designed. The architect has manifestly known nothing of billiards or the needs of a billiard-room. In nine cases out of ten the fanlight is constructed right over the table. The room is plainly regarded in the nature of a studio, and not for what it is intended to be. That a billiard-table is not a portable affair is overlooked. To place it immediately underneath the glass roofing is to leave it at the mercy of any leakage which storms, or other accidental occurrences, may bring. Therefore it is plain that, for precautionary reasons alone, a purely top-light is not best suited for the billiard-room. *The best light of all is a lantern light*—that is to say, a converging light from all sides on to the table. An equal distribution is thus guaranteed. A great point to be observed is to fix the table well within its focus, and thus insure as little shadow as possible being thrown from the balls or the cushions. Whenever there occurs a strong shading

along the cushions, or around the pockets, nothing more deceptive to the player can be imagined.

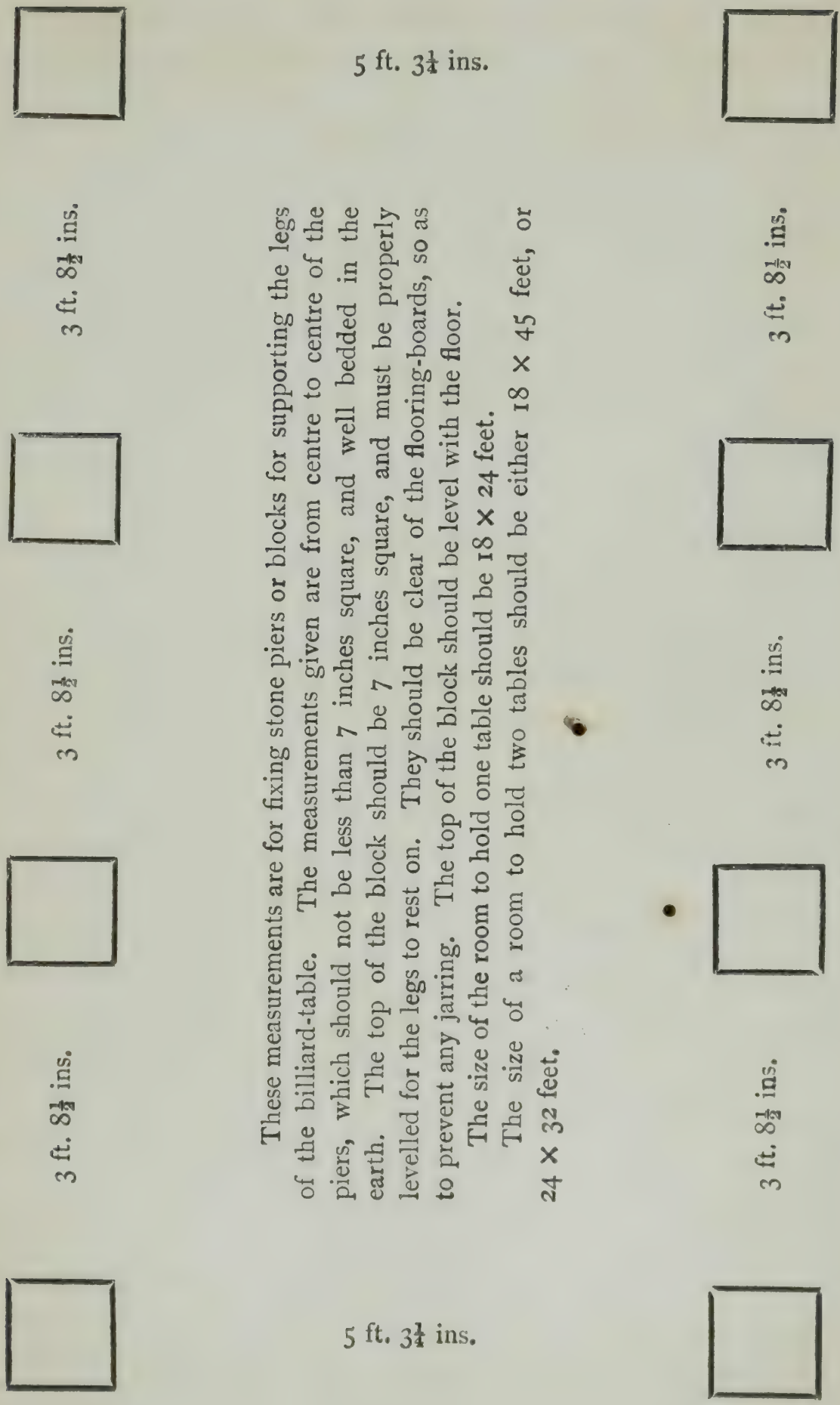
The sub-flooring of the room should be of concrete, to avoid dampness, and the consequent sinking of the table by reason of the over-boarding becoming insecure. Over the concrete it is optional whether a flooring of boards or linoleum is laid down, though the latter is undoubtedly the better of the two. The room must be kept at an even temperature. A plan for fixing the table is given on the next page.

LIGHTING.

The artificial lights should be raised about three feet above the bed of the table. It has been found that an arrangement of six lights, equally distributed on cross-rods to a long central bar, provides the best illumination. Again, the greatest care should be taken to insure that the light is clear, and the least possible shadows arise around the balls, cushions, and pockets; for again I must point out that nothing more detrimental to good playing than a dim and shadow-inducing light can be imagined. Another point, too, requiring attention is to keep the glare of the light out of the player's eyes. With men of short stature this is a first necessity. To safeguard against this, the lamp-shades must droop well below the lighting.

The best light that I have ever seen upon a billiard-table came from acetylene gas. The installation of the manufacturing plant in any household is so modest, and the saving of money so great as compared with ordinary

PLAN FOR FIXING A BILLIARD-TABLE.



These measurements are for fixing stone piers or blocks for supporting the legs of the billiard-table. The measurements given are from centre to centre of the piers, which should not be less than 7 inches square, and well bedded in the earth. The top of the block should be 7 inches square, and must be properly levelled for the legs to rest on. They should be clear of the flooring-boards, so as to prevent any jarring. The top of the block should be level with the floor.

The size of the room to hold one table should be 18 x 24 feet.

The size of a room to hold two tables should be either 18 x 45 feet, or 24 x 32 feet.

gas or electric light, that I must give it the preference over all other kinds of illumination for the billiard-room.

THE TABLE.

New tables have a strong inclination to get out of the level soon after they are fixed up. A shrinkage of the woodwork, owing to the weight of the slate bed, is the cause. Any weak spots naturally give more than others. Once remedied, the table will keep true for a very long time, unless badly used by players sitting on the cushions or lying on the bed instead of using the rests or butts, practices which any conscientious table-owner should seriously discourage.

In Australia things are better arranged for the private purchasers of tables than they are here. To us it is at once a matter of sending for a workman if the table gets out of the level. The Australian makers, Messrs. Allcock, of Melbourne, have affixed to their best tables a mechanical contrivance, by means of which, in conjunction with a spirit-level, the fault can be remedied with the utmost ease by the most inexperienced. At the very foot of each table-leg a circular, brassed groove is fitted. It is wormed inside to fit a screw lever, which, worked by hand, raises any part of the table (which needs attention as shown by the index of the spirit-level) to the required height. A child can handle the thing. What a boon it would be if our tables were so favoured.

The proper up-keep of a billiard-table, and the accessory implements for the game, are not studied as closely as they should be. There is nothing worse than

a neglected table, warped cues, and a set of balls which have cracked and become untrue. One deficiency alone of the kind will baffle the best of players, to say nothing of the combination, which, unfortunately, is the prevailing state of affairs in private billiard-rooms. I visit many of them, but in few cases do I find the table in the condition it should be.

The deficiency can be traced to a variety of causes. The most obvious is the neglect of the ordinary precautions, such as regular brushing and ironing, and keeping the bed and cushions free of the changes of temperature by means of a waterproof, air-tight covering. If constantly exposed to the air the cushions and cloth will inevitably depreciate. *So make a note to keep your table carefully covered up when it is not in use.*

With regard to the *brushing*, this should be done previously to, and immediately after, play. The art of brushing a table is to *brush always up to the head of the table, that is, with the flow of the cloth's nap, and never against it.* Take care, when brushing under the cushions, *that the woodwork edges of the brush do not touch the cloth.* Use only the bristles, which will not groove the cloth as the woodwork of the brush does. The dust arising from the brushing should be swept into the various pockets.

As concerns *ironing a table*, this should be done at regular intervals of, say, once a week. The iron should be heated in the shoe. When satisfied that it is hot enough, take it out of the shoe. *To test the degree of heat it bears, run the iron over a sheet of newspaper. If it scorches the paper it is too hot, and will also scorch the cloth. But if no discolourment is seen, the iron may be*

- *used with safety. Start ironing along the side of the table, from baulk cushion to top cushion (with the nap of the cloth).* The line of the iron's course will be clearly mapped out on the cloth. Do not raise the iron, but keep it on the move, in as straight a line as possible, up to the top cushion. Then return to the baulk end, and run along the length of cloth by the side of that previously ironed. Repeat the process till the centre of the table is reached, and then commence in the same way on the unironed portion. Take care to turn the point of the iron so as to pass the mouths of the pockets without catching at the sides, and, above all, do not allow it to come into contact with the cushions. The combined pressure and heat of the iron tend to alter the shape of the cushion, and cause the balls to jump as they rebound, or even to go so far as jump off the table. The jumping from the cushions, it may be stated, completely destroys the true angle of cushion rebounds.

If you take a pride in your billiard-table, *beware of the turned cloth.* It is a case of a new cloth, or none at all, when the old one becomes thin and frayed. The turned cloth is inimical to good billiard-playing.

THE CUES.

When not in use, the cues should be kept in the cue-rack, at a distance from the fire or stove. Care should be taken to have them placed in a perfectly upright position, resting on the butt-ends, so as to prevent the wood warping, or otherwise getting out of shape. They should occasionally be well rubbed with

an oiled silk rag to keep them in condition. In selecting a cue-tip, see that the hard black under-leather is the same thickness all the way round, and without flaws. The upper brown leather should not be too soft. To tip a cue a file and common glue alone are required. File the top of the cue and the under part of the tip perfectly level; then affix the tip with heated glue (let the bottle stand in hot water). Let the cue stand butt upwards (thus putting all the weight on the tipped end) for twenty-four hours. See that the tip does not project beyond the sides of the cue. If there is the slightest symptom of this, trim the overlapping parts of the tip neatly with a sharp pen-knife, and sandpaper it down to the level of the cue.

THE BALLS.

It is not such a difficult matter as is generally supposed to secure a good set of ivory billiard-balls. The great thing is to get them well seasoned. Newly turned ivory is most sensitive to any climatic changes, owing to the simple fact of its composition being a network of the most minute cells filled with gelatinous matter. Ivory is alive, and will expand with heat and contract with cold. A ball freshly cut from the centre of a tusk is soft and decidedly impressionable. A set of such balls will be found to be covered with indentations after they have been played with for a few minutes. The reason is that the surface of the balls is like their interior—soft and unseasoned. To remedy this, and give them a hard coating, is then plainly what has to be done. The only

way is to get your new set of balls above the standard size of $2\frac{1}{16}$ to $2\frac{3}{32}$ inches. Ask for, and see that you have, a set of full $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Knock them about daily. You will notice them becoming more and more untrue in their running every time you play with them. Then, say after about a couple of months of lusty knocking about, they will, in spite of all their indentations, have gained a hard coating. The balls are now seasoned, and much less subject to climatic changes than when they first came to you. It is now time to send them back to the turner's. They should return a strong, seasoned ball, with at least a good year's wear and tear in them. When they go wrong again, have them re-turned. A set of $2\frac{1}{8}$ -inch balls will stand about three turnings before they become too small for use—that is, less than $2\frac{1}{16}$ inches in diameter. The less the balls are exposed to the air, heat, or cold when not in use, the longer will they keep in proper condition. They should be kept in an airtight box lined with cotton-wool, or covered with bran.

A QUICK MEANS OF "SEASONING" A NEW SET OF BALLS IS TO TAP THEM WITH A WOODEN Mallet. ONE MAY ACCOMPLISH IN A SINGLE HOUR THE SAME RESULTS THAT MONTHS OF PLAYING WITH THE BALLS WOULD NEED. TAP THEM REPEATEDLY ON EVERY PART, THEN TAKE THEM TO THE BALL-TURNER'S.

Before playing it is wise to infuse the balls with animal heat. To bring them fresh to the table from the box is to have them, in cold and damp weather, chilled or in a callous condition, that renders them brittle and unsatisfactory to a degree. No

artificial heat will do. Any attempt at this will quickly ruin the ivory. To obtain the animal heat, place the balls in your trousers pocket some half-hour before placing them on the table. They will thereby, as can be felt by handling them, acquire a delicate glow that goes all through them, and brings all their sensitiveness to the highest pitch.

“THE AVERAGE AMATEUR”

BY A. R. WISDOM

I GLADLY accept Mr. Mannock's invitation to contribute a little paper to his book. Having had to go through many years' practice to reach even my present standard of play, I fancy I have hit upon some causes of the weakness of amateur play generally. We all know of the man who shapes badly, and moves about on the stroke, or the one who catches hold of his cue with all his might when he plays anything above medium pace. We are all agreed that they are hopeless players; and I place them at the very bottom of the scale.

A step higher we come to those who have some natural aptitude, but have no care, or thought, or inclination to do more than “knock the balls about” through an occasional “hundred up.” If they so willed it, they could become better players than most. But billiards is not their game, and they practically leave it alone. This type of player usually shines at cricket or football, his accuracy of stroke at billiards plainly arising from his keen eye and sound nerves.

Higher up still we arrive at the variety which, by common consent, is styled “the average amateur,” representing a mean break-average of twenty to thirty points, with an occasional jump to the realms of a forty.

Here we have good material to work upon, for in this category come many who possess a surprisingly true cue-delivery, but next to no knowledge of the movements of the balls following the stroke ; and others with an appallingly untrue cue-delivery, though possessed of some insight as to positional effects. Their respective merits and demerits counterbalance one another, leaving both types of players on a level, members of that vast section, “the average amateur.”

It is to this class that I would address my remarks. I can talk to them in a familiar way, because I, at one time, was one of them. So I will tell them just what was told me as to the means of rising to a higher level. My first lesson was to acquire a firm position at the table, a solid “bridge,” and a free cue. Then I was shown the inestimable value of the half-ball stroke, which, I unhesitatingly say, is the pivot of my game to-day. It is of tremendous assistance in losing-hazard and cannon play.

I was told to make all possible use of the red ball in my scoring. Seeing that I graduated in billiards in the days when the “spot stroke ” was in vogue, I need hardly say that I unfailingly did, or tried to do, so. But for all the potency of the red ball as a factor in the scoring of those days, it seems to me to be a moot point as to whether it does not hold almost equal importance under the present code of rules. Either in the moves at the top of the table, when one is always trying to get in position to put down the red in the corner pockets, or at the losing hazards, the coloured ball is the great accumulator of points. At any rate, I advocate, and myself adhere to, a policy of working incessantly upon

the red ball in connection with the pockets—losing or winning hazards. My reason is that it pays best from all points of view.

The great secret of playing on the red ball for losing hazards is invariably to keep it, or direct it, to the middle of the table. But in doing so one should beware of driving the red too closely by the corner pockets. Try to cushion it (if it must be cushioned) as far away from the corner pocket as possible. "The average amateur" displays a decided tendency to drive a played object-ball straight down by the cushion length up to the "shoulders" of, or into, the corner pocket. Such play is fatal, in the long run, and diametrically opposed to the idea of "leaving" the object-ball out in the middle of the table. REMEMBER TO CUSHION EARLY, IF NOT OFTEN.

Playing on the red ball to put it in a pocket is usually a preliminary to "going in off it" at the second stroke. If not placing your ball for a cannon "leave," you may gain position for a losing hazard off the spotted red ball along the top cushion anywhere within a few inches of the corner pockets. The further you are away from the pocket the more need will there be of running "side" to help the cue-ball into the pocket. This "cross losing hazard" is a stroke particularly worth knowing, and its differing phases should be closely studied. When it is not possible, or a matter of considerable uncertainty, to place the cue-ball in the line for it, there is a wider range for a losing hazard to be obtained around the middle pockets. WHEN YOU PUT THE RED BALL IN ALWAYS LOOK ABOUT YOU FOR ONE OR THE OTHER OF THESE LOSING-HAZARD POSITIONS.

When playing cannons from the cushions, never

forget that your ball comes off at varying angles, according to the pace you put into it. A slow ball will take a much wider sweep than a medium-paced one, and a very fast ball takes a straighter rebound altogether. Try a few strokes of the kind yourselves, and appreciate the cause of your constantly sending the cue-ball in between the cushion and second object-ball when trying for a cannon. As often as not the only real effect that running “side” makes on a cushion is the faster running of the cue-ball from it, and a slowing down with the use of reverse “side.” Alterations of pace with a plain ball will frequently do all you require.

In speaking of cushion play one is reminded of the mistaken notion of using a lot of running “side” when playing for a direct “screw” cannon, or taking a second chance of getting it back from a cushion, or by striking the latter in advance of the second object-ball. In all these instances it is safer, nine times out of ten, to use no “side,” but to direct all your judgment to the needs of a “screw” stroke. In the first place, the “side” is liable to pull the ball away from the cannon if you have given it the true direction; secondly, the “side” gives so much speed to the cue-ball as it cushions that its effects as it cannons (difficult at any time to follow) are impossible to judge; thirdly, by abstaining from the use of “side” you get a fairly straight return from a facing cushion—a plainly gauged rebound along a slanting cushion, and an infinitely more perceptible notion of the approximate effect on the second object-ball, as a plainly “screwed” ball never carries much pace. REMEMBER, THEN, NO “SIDE” IN THE VAST MAJORITY OF YOUR SCREW STROKES.

This abstinence from "side" may be counselled in most departments of the game. Where, however, it is, in my opinion, absolutely necessary is in run-through losing hazards along the cushions. The pocket "side," always used to turn the ball in from the further "shoulder," seems to double the size of the pocket. In many cushion-cannon strokes "side" plays a most helpful part, as it also does where narrowish, half-run-through cannons face you. But I have found the plain-ball strokes—thin, thinnish, half-ball, three-quarter-ball, and full—the safest things to handle. "Side" beats my friend "the average amateur" much more often than it helps him. So I counsel him NOT TO USE IT UNLESS HE IS OBLIGED TO DO SO.

It is remarkable how little the value of "top-side" is understood. Those deadenings of a ball's run when one is trying for an all-round cannon off a ball by the top cushion to one inside ball are caused as much by its use as by the excessive contact generally made with the first object-ball. "Top-side," used in conjunction with high speed and a thick impact with the latter, will be enough for many strokes which appear to "the average amateur" as absolutely requiring a "screw." It will run a ball, in a curling way, along a cushion, or very slantingly along by it (according to the degree of pace used and the impact on the first-played object-ball), as can speedily be realized by a few trials. In forcing losing hazards at a narrow pocket (that is, when the cue-ball travels close by the cushion rail to get at the pocket), it swings a ball most helpfully out and then in towards the pocket. This class of stroke should be closely studied, and the assistance of the "top-side" to the "pocket-side"

noted. THEREFORE, NEVER FORGET THAT “TOP-SIDE” HAS ITS OWN DEFINITE USES.

The low standard of amateur skill is what we should all do our best to try to raise to a higher plane. What I should like above all to see is a new generation of amateurs who, while just understanding enough of the theory of the game, will play it by their own initiative rather than by the set methods of professionals in the first flight. A number of good, free-cueing players is what we want—men who can handle the half-ball stroke in all its variations of different pace rebounds. Cramped cue-action and lack of cue-power are the abiding faults everywhere. The forcing stroke is the one that shows up all a player's faults ; that is, I consider, the real reason why my long-suffering friend, “the average amateur,” approaches it so diffidently, and with such slight success. I have heard this same forcing shot well described as “the champagne of billiards.”

THE END



GEO. WRIGHT & CO.,

BY ROYAL
WARRANT TO



H.M. KING EDWARD VII.

Contractors to
H.M. Government, the War
Office, and Admiralty.

BY SPECIAL
APPOINTMENT TO



H.R.H. THE
PRINCE OF WALES,
AND THE LEADING COURTS
OF EUROPE.

21 Prize Medals
awarded.

Billiard Table
Manufacturers,
MERCHANTS & SHIPPERS,
HIGH-CLASS ART CABINET MAKERS.

THE LARGEST SHOW ROOMS IN THE WORLD.

Upwards of 250 Tables in Stock to select from.
45 Guineas to 300 Guineas.

Several first-class Match and other Tables Secondhand.

The
"PREMIER" and the "NEOTERIC"
COMBINED BILLIARD & DINING TABLES.

(Geo. Wright & Co.'s Patent.)

The most perfect and the best Combination Tables ever
invented. Prices from 23 guineas and 30 guineas respectively.

Estimates given for the Complete Furnishing of BILLIARD
Clubs, Hotels, &c., on Easy Terms of Purchase.

SPECIALITY :

Fine Art & High-class Panelling, suitable
for Billiard Rooms, Entrance Halls, &c.

ESTIMATES FREE.

Original Inventors and Sole Makers of the

"EXCELSIOR" CUSHION

Guaranteed soft in any temperature, and very fast.

BONZOLINE BALLS, 2 $\frac{1}{16}$, 10 6 PER BALL.

HANDSOMELY ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE, 250 PAGES,
Post Free on application.

HEAD OFFICE AND SHOW ROOMS

158 to 164, Westminster Bridge Road, LONDON ;

West End Branch Show Rooms--

7, ARGYLL STREET, REGENT STREET, W.

Bonzoline Billiard Balls.



BEST SUBSTITUTE FOR IVORY.

• KNOWN ALL OVER THE WORLD.

To the Bonzoline Manufacturing Company.

“DEAR SIRs,—I have played with all makes of composition billiard balls, and in my opinion

• BONZOLINE BILLIARD BALLS
are far the best substitute for ivory, and the most reliable.

“Yours faithfully,

“C. DAWSON (Champion).

“September 22, 1903.”

MORE THAN A MILLION BALLS IN DAILY USE.

10s. 6d. per Ball; Size $2\frac{1}{16}$. Any Colour.
OF ALL BILLIARD FIRMS.

WHOLESALE ONLY FROM

The Bonzoline Manufacturing Co., Ltd.,

34 Queen Street, London, E.C.

LAWRENCE & CO.

(From POOLE'S, Saville Row,)

CIVIL, MILITARY & SPORTING OUTFITTERS
and Breeches Makers,

11, Great Russell St., Bedford Square,

Established
1881.

LONDON, W.C.

Telephone
2957 Central.

SPECIAL DEPARTMENT FOR LADIES' RIDING
HABITS & TAILOR-MADE GARMENTS

Under the Management of Mr. MAREK, from Thomas & Sons.



Mr. J. MAREK has three
distinct Improved Safety
Hunting Skirts which have
been thoroughly approved by
well-known Sportswomen
throughout the Kingdom,
being the outcome of his
experience of 19 years with
Messrs. Thomas & Sons.

*Patterns and Estimates for either Ladies' or Gentlemen's
Garments will be forwarded at once, on receipt
of request.*

CRYSTALATE



BILLIARD BALLS.

*THE ONLY COMPOSITION BILLIARD BALL
MADE IN ENGLAND.*

With these Balls . . .

H. W. STEVENSON,

EX-CHAMPION,

made his **GREAT RECORD BREAK** of

703

at Free Trade Hall, Manchester,

December, 1903, in a match

STEVENSON v. HARVERSON, 9000 UP,
under Association Rules.

“The performances of the Ball speak volumes, and I predict a great future for it.”

H. W. STEVENSON, Ex-Champion.

Professionals, the principal Amateurs, and the Press, all affirm that “Crystalate” is the finest Billiard Ball in the World.

Sold by Billiard Houses and Sports Depôts throughout the Empire.

. . . THE . . .

ENDOLITHIC MANUFACTURING Co., Ltd.,
POMONA BUILDINGS, LONDON, E.C.

BURROUGHS & WATTS,

LIMITED,
LARGEST . . .

BILLIARD TABLE MANUFACTURERS

THROUGHOUT THE EMPIRE.

By Special Appointment to H.M. King Edward VII.

SOLE MAKERS & PATENTEES

OF THE

. . . WORLD-RENOUNED . . .

***STEEL BLOCK VACUUM
CUSHIONS***

UNAFFECTED BY HEAT OR COLD.

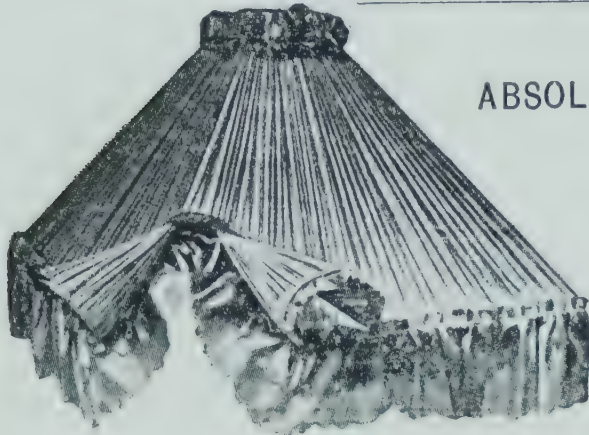
19, SOHO SQUARE, W.

. . . and . . .

GREAT PETER STREET, WESTMINSTER, S.W.

THE NEW
"VICTORIAN" BILLIARD SHADE.

Designed by Reg. No. 309278.
 J. P. MANNOCK, the world-renowned Professional Billiard Player.



ADVANTAGES:

ABSOLUTELY SHADOWLESS.

OPENS OVER EACH POCKET.
 EQUAL LIGHT OVER THE
 WHOLE TABLE.

DECORATIVE APPEARANCE.
 DURABILITY.

Made in all Colours.

Sole Makers: **C. KINMAN & CO.,**
 26, WHITEHEADS GROVE, CHELSEA, S.W.



**DUNVILLE'S
 WHISKY.**

Established 1808.

The Lancet, May 24, 1902, says:—"It is remarkably free from the ordinary impurities of Whisky. It contains, practically speaking, no extractives, no sweetening matter, while it is without any appreciable degree of acidity. The flavour is characteristic of Irish Whisky, 'smooth' and delicately malty, and the colour somewhat pale."

Guaranteed all Distilled at the
**ROYAL IRISH DISTILLERIES,
 BELFAST.**

London Office:
 239 & 241, SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, W.C.

ALCOCK & CO.,

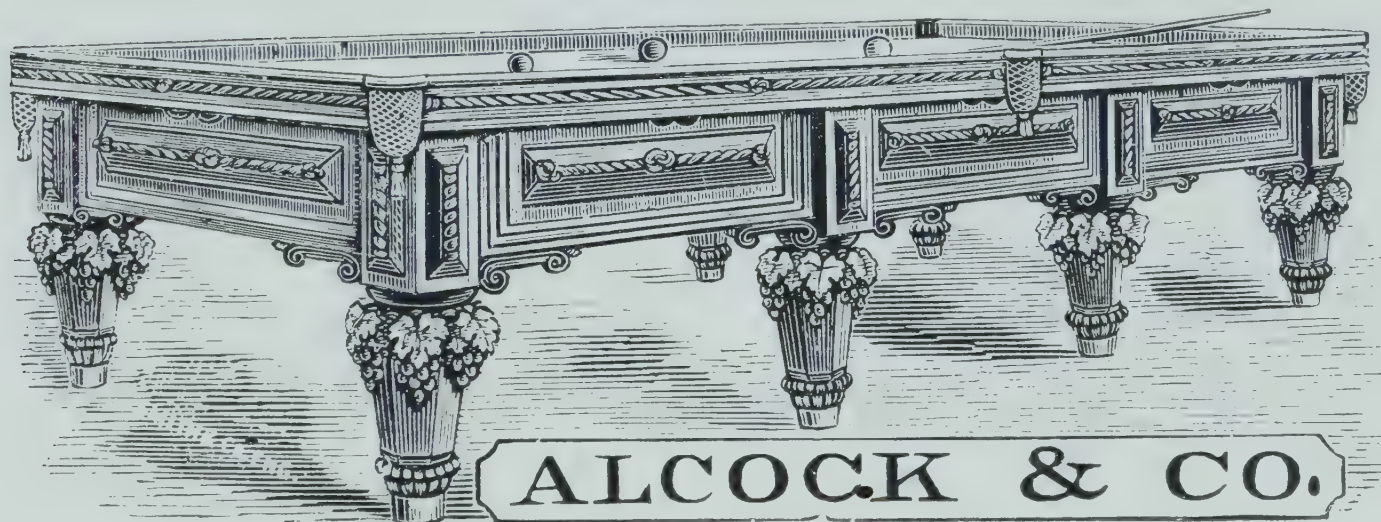
BILLIARD TABLE MANUFACTURERS

. . . to the . . .

MARQUIS OF LINLITHGOW.

Makers of the Imperial Low Cushions.

Can be fitted to any Table.



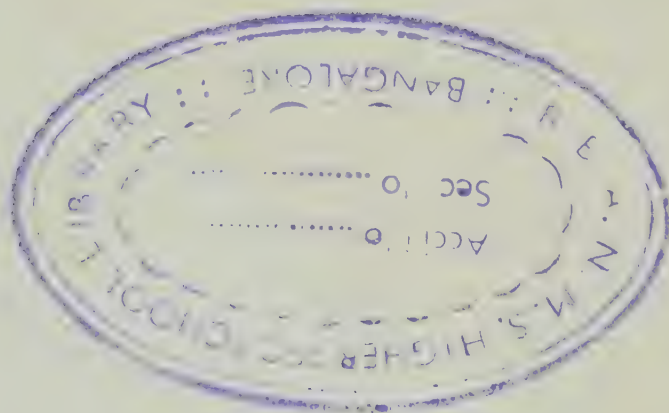
MELBOURNE, SYDNEY, PERTH,
NEW ZEALAND,

. . . and . . .

70, BISHOPSGATE STREET WITHIN,
LONDON, E.C.

Established over half a century.

*One of our handsome figured Blackwood Tables is erected
in the Hotel Victoria Billiard Room, London, W.C.*





ed.
...
the
...
er
...

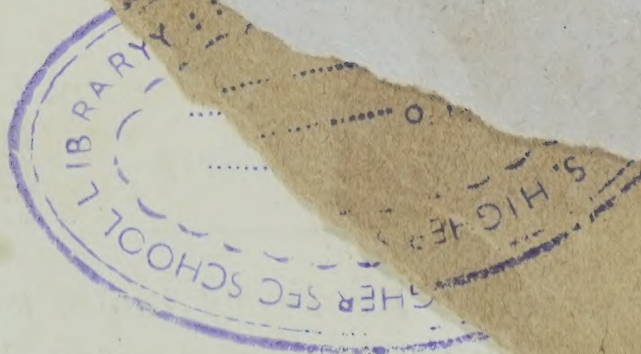
Faint, circular blue stamp, likely a library or archival mark, partially obscured by the tear.

R.B.A.N.M'S H.S (M) LIBRARY
Blore-42

Accession No; 1670

U.D.C. No: 794.7/Man

Date; 5.7.81. N04



RY

0

N

1

